

# EXPLANATION

Since the outbreak of the present world crisis several resolutions have been passed by the Congress Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. setting forth the Congress attitude regarding this war. The plenary session of the Congress that met at Ramgarh in March last also passed a resolution endorsing the position taken up by the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee. Besides these resolutions, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other national leaders made public statements from time to time elucidating the stand taken up by the Congress. The Viceroy and the two Secretaries of State for India made authoritative declarations and issued statements justifying the conduct of the British Government.

All this big mass of material is interspersed over a period of one full year and unless it is placed together in a chronological order, it is difficult to get a correct estimate of the Congress attitude. This brochure is only a compilation of historical documents in their chronological order. This may help the reader in understanding and correctly estimating the Congress stand.

Bombay,  
15-9-1940,

S. K. PATIL.

# WORKING COMMITTEE

(Wardha, August 9 to 12, 1939)

## WAR PREPARATION

The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the critical international situation and to the danger of war that overhangs the world. In this world crisis the sympathies of the Working Committee are entirely with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom and the Congress has repeatedly condemned fascist aggression in Europe, Africa and the Far East of Asia as well as the betrayal of democracy by British Imperialism in Czecho-Slovakia and Spain. The Congress has further clearly enunciated its policy in the event of war and declared its determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India. The Committee is bound by this policy of the Congress and will give effect to it so as to prevent the exploitation of Indian resources for imperialist ends. The past policy of the British Government as well as the recent developments, demonstrate abundantly that this Government does not stand for freedom and democracy and may at any time betray these ideals. India cannot associate herself with such a Government or be asked to give her resources for democratic freedom which is denied to her and which is likely to be betrayed.

At its meeting held in Calcutta on May 1, 1939, the All India Congress Committee reiterated this policy of the Congress and expressed its disapproval of the despatch of Indian troops to foreign countries. In spite of this clear expression of opinion, the British Government has sent, or is sending Indian troops to Egypt and Singapore against the declared will of the Indian people. Even apart from the War situation, the Central Legislative Assembly has previously declared that no Indian troops should be sent abroad without the consent of the Legislature. The British Government has thus flouted the declarations of the Congress and the Assembly and has taken steps which might

inevitably lead to India's entanglement in a war. It has further prolonged the life of the Central Assembly by another year. The Working Committee cannot accept these decisions of the British Government and must not only dissociate themselves from them but also take such steps as may be necessary to give effect to the Congress policy. As a first step to this end the Committee call upon all Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly.

The Committee further remind Provincial Governments to assist in no way the war preparations of the British Government and to keep in mind the policy laid down by the Congress, to which they must adhere. If the carrying out of this policy leads to the resignations or removal of the Congress Ministries they must be prepared for this contingency.

In the event of a war crisis leading to danger to any part of India from the air or otherwise it may be necessary for protective measures to be taken. The Committee will be prepared to encourage such measures if they are within the control of popular Ministries in the provinces. The Committee is however not agreeable to such protective measures being used as a cloak for war preparations under the control of the Imperial Government.

### **RUSSO-GERMAN PACT**

*August 24, 1939.*

On the night of 23rd August 1939, the Russo-German Pact of Non-Aggression was signed at Moscow by Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, and M. Molotov, the Russian Foreign Minister, in the presence of M. Stalin and the German Ambassador in Moscow.

### **ANGLO-POLISH PACT**

*August 25, 1939*

On August 25, the British Foreign Office issued a statement announcing an agreement for mutual assistance between Britain and Poland.

## POLAND ATTACKED BY GERMANY

*September 1, 1939.*

On September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland.

## BRITISH ULTIMATUM TO GERMANY

The following announcement was broadcast from 10, Downing Street on Sept. 3, morning:

"On September 1 Sir N. Henderson was instructed to inform the German Government that unless they were prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government would suspend all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared to promptly withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government would without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland. At 9 o'clock this morning His Majesty's ambassador in Berlin informed the German Government that unless not later than 11 a.m. (B.S.T.) to-day 3rd September satisfactory assurances to the above effect were given by the German Government and had reached His Majesty's Government in London a state of war would exist between the two countries as from that hour."

## ENGLAND DECLARES WAR

### PREMIER'S BROADCAST TO NATION

*Sept. 3, 1939.*

Mr. Chamberlain broadcasting to the nation at 11-15 said, "I am speaking to you from the Cabinet Room at 10, Downing Street. This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock, that they are prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us.

"I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received and in consequence this country is at war with Germany . . . ."

In the House of Commons Mr. Chamberlain said:—

"This country is now at war with Germany. It is a sad day for all of us, but for none is it sadder than for me. Everything I have done, worked for, hoped for and believed in, during my public life has crashed in ruins. The only thing left to me is to devote what powers I have for victory. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play, but I trust I will live to see the day when Hitlerism is destroyed and a restored and liberated EUROPE has been reestablished"

### H. M. KING'S WAR BROADCAST

On Sunday (September 3, 1939) night His Majesty, King Emperor, broadcast to the Empire :

"In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful hour in our history, I send every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

"For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war. Over and over again, we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies, but it has been in vain.

"We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called with our allies to meet a challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilised order in the world. It is a principle which permits a State, in selfish pursuit of power, to disregard its treaties and solemn pledges, which sanctions the use of force or threat of force against the sovereignty and independence of other States.

"Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely a mere primitive doctrine that might is right and if this principle is established throughout the world, the freedom of our own country and the whole British Commonwealth of Nations would be in danger.

"But far more than this, the peoples of the world would be kept in bondage of fear and all hopes of settled peace and of security of justice and liberty among nations would be ended. This is the ultimate issue confronting us. For the sake of all that we ourselves hold dear and of the world's order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.

"It is to this high purpose that I now call my people at home and my peoples across the seas who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm, firm and united in this time of trial.

"The task will be hard and there may be dark days ahead and war can no longer be on a confined battle-field; but we can only do the right as we see the right and reverently commit our course to God. If, one and all, we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then with God's help we shall prevail. May He bless and keep us all."

#### VICEROY'S PROCLAMATION

"Immediately following Mr. Chamberlain's declaration of War in Britain, His Excellency the Marquis of Linlithgow, Governor-General of India, proclaimed that India was at war with Germany. His Excellency issued a message to the people of India, in which he expounded the issues at stake and expressed confidence that India would fight for human freedom as against the rule of force.

"You have all heard that early on Friday morning the German armed forces invaded Polish territory. The German Government presented no ultimatum. They gave the Polish Government no warning.

"It is clear beyond any question from what has happened that Poland has had to face the same threat that Czecho-Slovakia had to face a year ago. Confronted with the demand that she should accept the dictation of a foreign Power in relation to her own territory and her own subjects, Poland has elected to stand firm. At this moment her troops are bravely defending the frontiers against the ruthless Power that seeks to overwhelm her.

His Majesty's Government and the Government of France have made it clear that they stand behind the former pledges against aggression which they had given to Poland. It is in these circumstances that we find ourselves at war with Germany to-day.

"The issues that emerge are clear. Acceptance of the policy and the methods which Germany has adopted would make life in the world impossible. It would represent the triumph of aggression and the supremacy of the rule of force. In circumstances such as these there could be no security in the world and no peace of mind for any of us. The ruthless onslaught of Germany on Poland without a declaration of war is in keeping with the rest of her conduct in this matter. What faces us is the safeguarding of principles vital to the future of humanity, principles of international justice and international morality, the principle that civilised men must agree to settle disputes between nations by reason and not by force, the principle that in the affairs of men the law of the jungle, the will of the strongest, irrespective of right and justice, cannot be allowed to prevail. To fail to take up this challenge would be to destroy for mankind any hope of true progress and true development; so long as this cruel and ruthless thing is in the world there can be no freedom of spirit for humanity.

"Nowhere do these great principles mean more than in India. There is no country that values them more highly than India, and none that has at all times been more concerned to safeguard them. His Majesty's Government, in entering the war, have done so with no selfish aims. They have done so to safeguard vital principles affecting all humanity; to ensure the orderly progress of civilisation; to see that disputes between nations are settled not by the arbitrament of force but by equitable and peaceful means. They have spared no effort to avoid the calamity that now threatens the world.

"I do not propose to speak to you at length this evening. Far more important than anything that I can say to you must be the response of each one of you to

this tremendous issue. With me, I am certain, you will feel that in the stern and testing days that lie before us victory—the triumph of Right—will not be secured by arms alone. We shall all of us have to depend upon those inner and spiritual forces which in all great emergencies of life bear the true and unfailing source of strength and fortitude.

"In a cause such as this the wholehearted sympathy and the support of all in this great country, whether in British India or in the Indian States, will, I am certain, be forthcoming without distinction of class, of creed, of race, or of political party. I am confident that on a day on which all that is most precious and most significant in the civilisation of the modern world stands in peril, India will make her contribution on the side of human freedom as against the rule of force and play a part worthy of her place among the great nations and the historic civilisations of the world."

## THE SIMLA VISIT

By M. K. Gandhi

(*Simla, 5-9-1939.*)

At Delhi, as I was entraining for Kalka, a big crowd sang in perfect good humour, to the worn-out refrain of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". "We do not want any understanding." I had then my weekly silence. Therefore I merely smiled. And those who were standing on the foot-board returned the smile with their smile, whilst they were admonishing me not to have any understanding with the Viceroy. I had also a letter from a Congress committee giving me similar warning. Neither of these counsellors knew me. I did not need the warning to know my limitations. Apart from the Delhi demonstration and a Congress committee's warning, it is my duty to tell the public what happened at the interview with H. E. the Viceroy.

I knew that I had no instructions whatsoever from the Working Committee in the matter. I had answered a telegraphic invitation and taken the first train I could



catch. And what is more, with my irrepressible and out and out non-violence, I knew that I could not represent the national mind and I should cut a sorry figure if I tried to do so. I told His Excellency as much. Therefore there could be no question of any understanding or negotiation with me. Nor, I saw, had he sent for me to negotiate. I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty-handed and without any understanding, open or secret. If there is to be any understanding, it would be between the Congress and the Government.

Having, therefore, made my position *vis a vis* the Congress quite clear, I told His Excellency that my own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian stand-point. I told him that I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth the destruction of London which had hitherto been regarded as impregnable. And as I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down. I have become disconsolate. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such things to go on. My non-violence seems almost impotent. But the answer comes at the end of the daily quarrel that neither God nor non-violence is impotent. Impotence is in men. I must try on without losing faith even though I may break in the attempt.

And so, as though in anticipation of the agony that was awaiting me, I sent on the 23rd July from Abbottabad the following letter to Herr Hitler :

"Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make an appeal for whatever it may be worth.

It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay the price

for an object, however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?

Any way I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you."

How I wish that even now he would listen to reason and the appeal from almost the whole of thinking mankind, not excluding the German people themselves. I must refuse to believe that Germans contemplate with equanimity the evacuation of big cities like London for fear of destruction to be wrought by man's inhuman ingenuity. They cannot contemplate with equanimity such destruction of themselves and their own monuments. I am not therefore just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?

Yet it almost seems as if Herr Hitler knows no God but brute force and, as Mr. Chamberlain says, he will listen to nothing else. It is in the midst of this catastrophe without parallel that Congressmen and all other responsible Indians individually and collectively have to decide what part India is to play in this terrible drama.

### "STRUGGLE FOR THE NEW ORDER"

*Sept. 8, 1939*

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in an interview with the Associated Press at Rangoon on 8th September, 1939, on his return from China, said :

"We have repeatedly stated that we are not out to bargain. We do not approach the problem with a view to taking advantage of Britain's difficulties. This war is going to change the face of things. The old order is dead and cannot be revived. If we are making for a new order, let us do so consciously, defining it clearly and acting up to it from now onwards.

"It is perfectly true that in a conflict between Democracy and Freedom on the one side and Fascism and Aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of Democracy and we cannot tolerate with pleasure ideas of victory for the Fascist and Imperialist Aggressors. But mere repetition of phrases about Democracy and Freedom does not mean that the struggle is for Democracy. The last war showed that and the past year or more demonstrated still more how Democracy can be betrayed in the name of Peace and Freedom.

"The real test as to whether this struggle is for Democracy and Freedom does not lie in loud enunciations of principles, but in practice. If England stands for self-determination the proof of that should be India. The proposed Federation is again a complete denial of both.

"I should like India to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for the new order. I hope that my country will look at this problem not from a narrow national viewpoint, but from the widest international viewpoint and seek to foster further the good of the world because our own good is involved in it. I hope that all of you will be wise enough and strong enough to forget petty rivalries and conflicts and rise to the height of the occasion, thinking only of the freedom of India and the evolution of a new world order."

## WORKING COMMITTEE MEETS TO CONSIDER WAR CRISIS

*Wardha, Sept. 8-15, 1939*

The Committee met on the 8th. As the president had not arrived and was to arrive next morning, it was decided that the meeting be postponed to the 9th. The Committee with all the invitees except Sri Jawaharlal Nehru met on the 9th. They met again on subsequent days. Sri Jawaharlal Nehru who arrived at Wardha from China on the 10th evening participated in the discussion from 11th morning. On the 11th the Working Committee decided to invite Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, to participate in the deliberations.

The following telegraphic communications took place between the President and Mr. M. A. Jinnah :

Mr. M. A. Jinnah,  
Hotel Cecil,  
Simla.

11-9-39.

Congress Working Committee discussing War Situation. View serious question affecting India should like discuss with you. Would appreciate your joining discussions at Wardha any day upto 15th.

RAJENDRA PRASAD.

Babu Rajendra Prasad,  
Congress President,  
Wardha.

11-9-39.

Your telegram, shall be glad discuss situation with you at Delhi, cannot go Wardha owing previous commitments. Muslim League Working Committee Meeting Delhi seventeenth. Am bound reach Delhi thirteenth.

JINNAH.

Mr. M. A. Jinnah,  
New Delhi.

12-3-39.

Thanks your telegram. Purpose of inviting you was to receive your assistance in shaping Working Committee decision on critical situation. That purpose can't be served by my coming Delhi.

RAJENDRA PRASAD.

After prolonged discussions which lasted for nearly 5 days, the Committee issued the following statement.

#### WAR CRISIS AND INDIA

"The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government,

the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

'The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

'The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources, for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great

risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses, taken away from her.

'The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-18, the declared war aims were, preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very Governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious Powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.

'Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

'Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the

peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

'If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and imperialism and fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide her own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

'The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. The crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganisation of economic relations on

a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

'The Working Committee have noted that many rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

'As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.



'In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

'The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

'War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities, cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of fascism and imperialism are removed. To that end the Working

Committee are prepared to give their co-operation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

'The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to a victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and imperialist oppression.

'The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.'

## WAR COMMITTEE

The Committee passed the following resolution :

"In view of the situation arising out of the European War and statement thereon issued by the Working Committee, the Committee hereby appoint a Sub-Committee consisting of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru (Chairman), Maulana Abulkalam Azad and Sri Vallabhbhai Patel to deal with the questions in connection with the situation."

## THE KING'S MESSAGE TO INDIA

*Simla, Sept. 11, 1939.*

The Governor-General addressed a Joint Session of the Central Legislature. At the very commencement His Excellency read the following message from His Majesty, the King-Emperor:—

"In these days, when the whole of civilisation is threatened, the widespread attachment of India to the

cause, in which we have taken up arms, has been a source of deep satisfaction to me. I also value most highly the many generous offers of assistance made to me by the Princes and people of India. I am confident that in the struggle, upon which I and my people have now entered, we can count upon sympathy and support from every quarter of the Indian continent in the face of a common danger. Britain is fighting for no selfish ends, but for the maintenance of a principle vital to the future of mankind—the principle that relations between civilised states be regulated, not by force, but by reason and law, so that men may live free from the terror of war, to pursue the happiness and well-being which should be the destiny of mankind.” (Sd.) George R. I.

### SUSPENSION OF THE FEDERATION OF INDIA

At the close of his address His Excellency announced:

“I will add only one word more, in regard to our federal preparations. Those preparations, as you are aware, are well advanced, and great labour has been lavished on them in the last three years. Federation remains, as before, the objective of His Majesty's Government; but you will understand, without any elaborate exposition on my part, the compulsion of the present international situation, and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in suspense the work in connection with preparations for Federation, while retaining Federation as our objective. I feel certain that, at a time when the struggle which is raging elsewhere is uppermost in our thoughts, this is a moment in which that emergency, and matters directly associated with that emergency, must be of predominant and, in a sense, almost exclusive importance.

“Our trust must be that, under Providence the forces of right and of justice will triumph, and that we may be able to take up again those interrupted activities on which we have been engaged for the furtherance of the constructive work of peace and of the progress and the prosperity of India.”

## GANDHIJI'S COMMENT ON THE MANIFESTO

*Sezam, 15-9-1939.*

The Working Committee's statement on the world crisis took four days before it received final shape. Every member expressed his opinion freely on the draft that was, at the Committee's invitation, prepared by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I was sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally. This could only be done on a purely non-violent basis. But the Committee had a tremendous responsibility to discharge. It could not take the purely non-violent attitude. It felt that the nation had not imbibed the non-violent spirit requisite for the possession of the strength which disdains to take advantage of the difficulty of the opponent. But in stating the reasons for its conclusion the Committee desired to show the greatest consideration for the English.

The author of the statement is an artist. Though he cannot be surpassed in his implacable opposition to Imperialism in any shape or form, he is a friend of the English people. Indeed he is more English than Indian in his thoughts and make-up. He is often more at home with Englishmen than with his own countrymen. And he is a humanitarian in the sense that he reacts to every wrong, no matter where perpetuated. Though, therefore, he is an ardent nationalist his nationalism is enriched by his fine internationalism. Hence the statement is a manifesto addressed not only to his own countrymen, not only to the British Government and the British people, but it is addressed also to the nations of the world including those that are exploited like India. He has compelled India, through the Working Committee, to think not merely of her own freedom, but of the freedom of all the exploited nations of the world.

The same time that the Committee passed the statement it appointed a Board of his choice with himself as Chairman to deal with the situation as it may develop from time to time.

I hope that the statement will receive the unanimous support of all the parties among Congressmen. The

strongest among them will not find any lack of strength in it. And at this supreme hour in the history of the nation the Congress should believe that there will be no lack of strength in action, if action becomes necessary. It will be a pity if Congressmen engage in petty squabbles and party strife. If anything big or worthy is to come out of the Committee's action, the undivided and unquestioned loyalty of every Congressman is absolutely necessary. I hope too that all other political parties and all communities will join the Committee's demand for a clear declaration of their policy from the British Government with such corresponding action as is possible amidst martial conditions. Recognition of India and for that matter of all those who are under the British Crown, as free and independent nations seems to me to be the natural corollary of British professions about democracy. If the war means anything less, the co-operation of dependent nations can never be honestly voluntary, unless it were based on non-violence.

All that is required is mental revolution on the part of British statesmen. To put it still more plainly, all that is required is honest action to implement the declaration of faith in democracy made on the eve of the war, and still being repeated from British platforms. Will Great Britain have an unwilling India dragged into the war or a willing ally co-operating with her in the prosecution of a defence of true democracy? The Congress support will mean the greatest moral asset in favour of England and France. For the Congress has no soldiers to offer. The Congress fights not with violent but with non-violent means, however imperfect, however crude the non-violence may be.

**WAR SUB-COMMITTEE CIRCULAR TO P. C. C'S**  
*September 16, 1939.*

Dear comrades,

For many years past all of us have lived on the verge of a world crisis and preoccupied as we were with our vital national problems, the Congress has often given thought to the approaching crisis and laid down our broad policy in

regard to it. Now that crisis has come and war rages in Europe, in addition to the Far Eastern war, which has now been going on for two and a half years. Every Congressman has been deeply moved by this turn of events and has given earnest consideration to our duty at this juncture. Not only the directions of the Congress during these past years but also the very basis of the Congress and its reason for existence compel us to play a worthy and effective part in the development of events. We have not been onlookers of the events in India passively adapting ourselves to what has happened. The Congress has essentially been a body of action and struggle in the cause of India's freedom and has shaped India's destiny for many years. That grave responsibility has to be shouldered afresh by the Congress in this crisis, which affects India as well as the rest of the world. As you are aware the Working Committee has given the most earnest consideration to these developments and have issued a statement in which they have clearly laid down India's attitude. We invite your attention to this statement so that your provincial and local committees and all Congressmen should appreciate the position fully and act in accordance with the advice given. That statement is a dispassionately worded document, clarifying the issues as they affect India in simple language and indicating the road that India has to travel in these troubled times. The implications of that statement and the possible developments must be clear to you.

The Committee have viewed the crisis in the widest perspective and considered the cause of Indian freedom in relation to world freedom. We, who claim to labour for great ends in India cannot lose sight of these perspectives. This crisis will not pass, as the Working Committee say, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. The world is going to be refashioned and India is going to play her part in this refashioning. Many questions arise as to our day-to-day activities, more especially during this period when our final decision has not been taken. We shall endeavour to answer them as they are put to us. As you are aware, a special sub-committee consisting of us three has been appointed to deal with the war emergency and we shall always be at your disposal for

reference or advice. Our sub-committee will, of course, be guided by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President, Shri Rajendra Prasad.

Two matters, however, have to be borne in mind, for they are of essential importance. Whatever the developments might be, we can only face them with dignity and strength, if our organisation is well prepared and has put an end to internal controversy and conflict. No lover of the Congress and of Indian freedom may do anything which impairs our unity and joint will for action. We have all to rise above our petty selves and become in this crisis of our destiny, true soldiers of India, speaking and acting together, with dignity and forbearance and in accordance with the ideals and principles we have cherished. Our first duty is to tune up our organisation and keep it in a fit condition for whatever demands might be made upon it. Secondly, we must not individually or severally act or speak hastily, precipitating a development before its proper time. We must function in accordance with the spirit of the Working Committee's statement and not over-reach it or belittle it in our words or deed. That would be a disservice to the larger cause we seek to serve, as well as to this unity, which is essential in our ranks.

Your provincial and local committees should give the widest publicity to the Working Committee's statement, and explain its implications more particularly the essential need for the tightening up of our organisation and preparing it for all difficulties and trials we may have to face. Unity and discipline have to be emphasised as well as that the final decision has not been taken yet and this will depend on circumstances and developments. Our position has been frankly and clearly stated before India and the world; to that we shall adhere and seek, above all, to follow the paths which lead to world freedom and reorganisation, which must be based on our freedom. But any action taken by an individual Congressman, which goes beyond the Working Committee's statement, will not only lead to a loosening of our discipline but to a weakening of our cause and to controversy when we have to present a united front. This has to be avoided. Strength will not come to us by individual action or by brave speeches but by disciplined

and united effort. The hour of trial has come again upon us. Let us be worthy of it.

Jawaharlal Nehru  
Abulkalam Azad  
Vallabhbhai Patel

## LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*September 26, 1939.*

In the house of Lords, asked by private notice by Lord Snell to make a statement on India Lord Zetland said he gladly responded to the invitation and did so with all the more readiness in that it provides me with an opportunity for giving expression to the high appreciation of His Majesty's Government of the support, which has been accorded to them by all classes in India. From the Princes have come the most generous offers of men, money and personal service. From individuals in all parts of the country there have poured in messages of sympathy and support.

His Majesty's Government have noted with special gratification the statements made by the Prime Ministers of the Punjab and Bengal pledging their aid unconditionally in the struggle upon which we have entered, and they have also observed with very real appreciation the support which the Governors have received from Ministries in all the Indian Provinces in putting into operation such measures as had been necessary to meet the abnormal circumstances resulting from the outbreak of war.

Resort to force following upon a succession of breaches of faith by the German Government, unparalleled surely in the history of mankind, which compelled us to take up arms, has been unequivocally condemned by all political parties in India, whose leaders have expressed their unqualified sympathy with the victims of aggression. It is indeed abundantly clear that the triumph of the principles for which the Nazi Government stands would be regarded as a calamity of the utmost magnitude by all sections of Indian people.

I am bound to add, however, that in the course of a statement recently issued, those who have been authorised,



to speak for the Indian National Congress have indicated that they would find it difficult to co-operate with Great Britain in the prosecution of the war except upon conditions affecting the political relations between the two countries. These conditions have so far been expressed in abstract terms and I am not at present prepared to comment upon them.

I can, however, assure you that the Viceroy is in close personal contact with leaders of Indian opinion, including representatives of the Congress and All-India Muslim League, who likewise, within the last few days, defined their general attitude towards war, and that he hopes to discuss with them various issues arising out of the situation.

I should like to add that a tribute is due to the Viceroy himself and his colleagues in the Government for the efficiency with which their preparations for meeting the emergency have been made and for the smoothness with which such preparations have been carried into effect.

*September 27, 1939.*

Replying to the debate, Lord Zetland quoted Lord Snell's remarks that it was natural, though rather ill-timed, that the leaders of the Congress "should take this opportunity of reasserting their aims towards a fuller form of self-government than they at present possess."

I quite appreciate the fact that it is natural. I know many of the leaders of the Congress movement; they are men who are animated by burning patriotism and they do, I think, sometimes lose sight, while lifting their eyes to stars of the practical difficulties which stand in the way on the ground at their feet. But while I am ready to admit that it may be natural that they should take this occasion to reemphasise their claims, I cannot help expressing the feeling that it is somewhat unfortunate that they should have chosen this time to reassert their claims. I say that for more reasons than one. I think the British people are very susceptible to a treatment which they regard as honourable and appropriate to a particular occasion. I think that they (the British) will be very much more willing, when the time comes, to listen to the claims made to them; than if they are animated by a spirit of resentment at the

silence on my part at this juncture would be a distinct disservice both to India and England. I was unprepared for the old familiar flavour in the debate in the shape of drawing comparisons unflattering to the Congress. I maintain that the Congress is an all-inclusive body. Without offence to anybody it can be said of it that it is the one body that has represented for over half a century, without a rival, the vast masses of India irrespective of class or creed. It has not a single interest opposed to that of the Musalmans or that of the people of the States. Recent years have shown unmistakably that the Congress represents beyond doubt the interest of the people of the States. It is that organisation which has asked for a clear definition of the British intentions. If the British are fighting for the freedom of all, then their representatives have to state in the clearest possible terms that the freedom of India is necessarily included in the war aim. The content of such freedom can only be decided by Indians and them alone. Surely it is wrong for Lord Zetland to complain as he does, though in gentle term, that the Congress should at this juncture, when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle, ask for a clear declaration of British intentions. I suggest that the Congress has done nothing strange or less than honourable in asking for such a declaration. Only a free India's help is of value. And the Congress has every right to know that it can go to the people and tell them that at the end of the war India's status as an independent country is as much assured as that of Great Britain. As a friend of the British I, therefore, appeal to English statesmen that they will forget the old language of imperialists and open a new chapter for all those who have been held under imperial bondage.

### **PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU**

*(Allahabad, September 29, 1939)*

I have read the report of Lord Zetland's statement in the House of Lords with deep regret. I do not wish to enter into any controversy with him on this subject. The Congress Working Committee had explained the position of the Congress at length and with clarity and dignity. Lord Zetland has not followed the Working Committee's example in this respect. We had tried to consider the problem of India in the larger context of War aims and peace aims and has

requested British Government to declare clearly what their aims in this War were and further give effect to such aims in so far as it was possible in the present.

It was made perfectly clear by the Working Committee as well as by Congress leaders that we were not out to bargain or to take advantage of England's difficulty. But it was essential in our opinion, both from the point of view of India and the world, that these War aims should be clarified and people made to believe in their reality and their bona fides. It is astonishing that a request of this kind should be called inopportune and ill-timed.

The question is not of India only, but of all the world and all those who have faith in the future of humanity and who are determined to rid the world of all causes of War and human exploitation.

Therefore, the Working Committee requested the British Government not only on behalf of India, but on behalf of vast numbers of people in the world, to clarify this position and thus to bring some measure of hope in the despairing hearts of humanity. Being concerned especially and inevitably with India and the Indian people, we wanted to know how these War aims applied to India in the future and in the present.

We want to know at the same time how they apply to countries of Europe, to China, and to the various colonies. We have condemned Fascism and all its works with all our might.

Lord Zetland says that it will be a calamity, if Congress Governments withdrew from the administration of various Provinces in India.

I agree, but it would be an infinite calamity for us and for others, if these Congress Governments forgot all ideals that we have proclaimed and lost public support on which they based themselves.

It would be also an infinite calamity, if the War went on with no clarification of issues and resulted not only in terrible destruction and horror, but also in perpetuation of every system which was denounced in the name

of freedom and democracy. Whatever may be said about the statement of the Working Committee, no one can accuse them of vagueness. They have framed clear questions which demand answer.

In this grave hour of trial for all the world, when the whole fabric of civilisation is threatened, no responsible person, whether he is an Indian or an Englishman or any one else, can ignore or set aside those vital questions. No one should talk in terms of petty bargaining when issues at stake are so mighty and overwhelming.

No one also can consider these issues in terms of twenty years ago, because the world has changed and India has changed and for any one to forget this overwhelming fact is to exhibit his total want of understanding of things as they are. That way lies peril not only for India and for England, but for the world at large.

Though the world has changed and is likely to change in the immediate future at a terrific pace, Lord Zetland still speaks in terms of yesterdays that are dead and gone. He might have delivered his speech twenty years ago.

It is too late, it is indeed impossible for any of us, whether we are in England or India, to stop the rushing torrent of change. If we are wise, we can control it to some extent, possibly divert it, into right directions.

I want to repeat with all the emphasis that I possess that we have not put forward any demand in the spirit of the market-place. It is our duty as responsible Indians to consider the freedom and prosperity of India. That is the essential function of the Congress and it can never forget that.

But we have endeavoured to view this, specially in these dynamic times, from a larger point of view, because we are convinced that no problem can be solved to-day without reference to world problems.

If it was necessary for the sake of world freedom and prosperity, I am sure, India would even forego some National advantage, for we realise that national advantage brought at that cost will not be worth having for long.

But we must be convinced of that world freedom and we must see India in the picture of world freedom. Then only will War have meaning for us and move our minds and hearts, for then we shall be struggling and suffering for a cause that is worthwhile not only for us, but for all the peoples of the world. Because we feel that large numbers of British people have the same world ideals as many of us possess in India that we have offered them our co-operation in the realization of these ideals. But if these ideals are not there, what do we fight for?

Only a free and consenting India can throw her weight for ideals that are openly proclaimed and acted upon.

### VICEROY INTERVIEWS LEADERS

October 3, the Viceroy had talks with Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Congress President and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The talks commenced at 10-45 A.M. and lasted upto one P.M. The talks related to the Congress Working Committee's statement of September 14.

October 4, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had an interview with the Viceroy.

### ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

(Wardha, Oct. 9-10, 1939)

#### WAR CRISIS

The declaration of war in Europe has created an international situation of the gravest import to the world and to India, and the All India Congress Committee charged with the heavy responsibility of guiding the people of India in this moment of world crisis, has sought guidance from the principles and declarations of the Congress in considering this grave situation. The Congress has been guided throughout by its objective of achieving the independence of the Indian people and the establishment of a free democratic state in India wherein the rights and interests of all minorities are preserved and safe-guarded. The means it has adopted in its struggles and activities have been peaceful and legitimate, and it has looked upon war and violence with horror and as opposed to progress

and civilisation. In particular, the Congress declared itself opposed to all imperialist wars and to the domination of one country over another.

In spite of the repeated declarations of the Congress in regard to war, the British Government have declared India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people, and various far-reaching measures have been hurried through the legislatures and promulgated in the form of ordinances vitally affecting them and circumscribing and limiting the powers of the Provincial Governments.

The All India Congress Committee, however, does not wish to take any final decision precipitately and without giving every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified, with particular reference to India. The Committee approves of and endorses the statement issued by the Working Committee on September 14, 1939 on the war crisis, and repeats the invitation contained therein to the British Government to state their war aims and peace aims.

While the Committee condemns Fascism and Nazi aggression, it is convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy to all colonial countries and by the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate imperialist control. In particular, India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The A.I.C.C. earnestly trusts that this declaration will be made by the British Government in any statement that it may make in regard to its war and peace aims.

The Committee desire to declare afresh that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities to which the Congress has always pledged itself.

The Committee approves of the formation by the Working Committee of the War Emergency Sub-Committee and authorises the Working Committee to take such steps as may be necessary to give effect to this resolution and to their statement on the war crisis

# ALL INDIA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE

## STANDING COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT

*(October 11, 1939.)*

The Standing Committee of the States' Peoples' Conference have met at a time of grave crisis in the world, when war rages in Europe and the people of India have to take vital decisions of the gravest import to their future. This future will necessarily comprise the states, and even in the present the crisis is having its direct repercussions in the Indian States. The Committee desire to associate themselves fully with the statement issued by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on September 14, 1939, and with the resolution of the All India Congress Committee on the War Crisis passed on October 10, 1939. Believing, as they do, in the unity of India and a common freedom for all the Indian people, they record their deep satisfaction that the Congress has, at this critical juncture given powerful voice to the demand of the Indian people for democratic freedom. In this freedom to come the people of the States must be equal sharers and they must be prepared to shoulder equal responsibilities.

The immediate cause of this war in Europe was Nazi aggression and the Western allies have proclaimed that they are fighting in the cause of democracy, freedom and self-determination. With these objectives the Standing Committee is in full agreement but it is incumbent that these objectives should be clarified and applied to countries outside Europe and especially to India. The Standing Committee therefore associate themselves with the request made by the National Congress to the British Government for a full and unequivocal statement of Britain's war and peace aims. These aims should be applicable to the people of the Indian States also, who live under an autocratic system which is more reactionary than even the Nazi regime against which Britain is fighting. As the Congress Working Committee has stated,

"the British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year." To support this system in India is the very negation of democracy and all that Great Britain is said to stand for in the war.

Many of the Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources to Great Britain for the prosecution of the war and have expressed their support of the cause of democracy in Europe. It is incongruous in the extreme that such professions should be made while undiluted autocracy prevails in the States. The rulers have not in any way sought to consult their people before offering the resources of their States or committing themselves to the war. The Standing Committee, speaking on behalf of the people of the Indian States, cannot accept this commitment, or agree to this continuation of autocracy in the States because war has broken out in Europe.

The Committee note that the war has already been used for the purpose of introducing new and stringent repressive measures and putting an end to civil liberty in many of the States. In some states, promised reforms in the administration have been deliberately postponed because of the war. A war, ostensibly for democracy, is thus resulting in greater autocracy and repression in the States and in stopping all advance. The people of the States express their strongest protest against this and are wholly unable to give their support to the war under these conditions. They may have to resist impositions forced down upon them.

In the opinion of the Standing Committee the question of introducing democratic institutions in the States is of urgent and vital importance, so that the people of the States might take their proper place in the shaping of a free and independent India and in the new world order to come. The Committee therefore invite the various Rulers to declare that they accept the objective of full responsible government in their States and undertake to give effect to it, in the largest possible measure, in the



immediate future. The new repressive legislation should be suspended and civil liberty allowed. India may be legally at war but there are no war conditions anywhere near India and certainly not in the States, which can justify the application of extreme measures of repression.

The Standing Committee desire to make it clear that the Rulers can expect no co-operation from the people unless these fundamental changes are made and the governance of the States is carried on with popular consent and through popular representatives.

The Committee send their greetings to the peoples of many States who are carrying on, with courage and fortitude, their struggle for democratic freedom and civil liberty. This struggle must inevitably become a part of the larger struggle for Indian freedom and for that people should prepare.

## DECLARATION OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

*Oct. 18, 1939*

His Excellency the Viceroy issued the following statement in regard to Britain's policy to India on 18th October :—

"Since the outbreak of war and more particularly during the last four weeks I have been in the closest touch with the leaders of political opinion in British India and with representatives of the Princely Order; and I have spared no effort to acquaint myself by personal discussion with the trend of feeling; to ascertain the views of the different sections of public opinion in this country on the great questions of the day, and in particular on this question of the basis on which, and the extent to which, India could best co-operate in the prosecution of the war; and to satisfy myself as to the extent to which a basis of common agreement exists, and as to the manner in which the position, so far as it may still remain obscure,

can best be clarified. Matters have now reached a point at which, in my judgment, it would be well that I should make a statement designed, in the light of the discussions which I have had during these past few weeks, to clear the position on the main questions which emerge at the present moment. I would make a preliminary observation. I have had the advantage of a full and frank discussion with no fewer than 52 people—with Mr Gandhi, with the President and Members of the Congress Working Committee, with Mr Jinnah and with representative Members of the Muslim League Organization, with the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and with a great variety of persons prominent in the political life of British India.

As was only to be expected, conversations with representatives of so many different points of view revealed marked differences of outlook, markedly different demands, and markedly different solutions for the problems that lie before us. Again, and that too was what might have been expected at a time such as the present, reservations or demands for special protection on one side have tended to be balanced by proposals for still more marked constitutional changes on another. I would ask that these differences of view, deeply and sincerely held, I have not the least doubt, by those who have advanced them to me, should be borne in mind when we consider our present problems, for they have a very direct and obvious relevance to them.

I trust most earnestly that I shall be able to dispel certain misapprehensions which are, I am clear, widely and genuinely held, and that, even if to a degree more limited than has been urged upon me from many quarters, I may be able to clarify the position as regards our hopes and our objectives for India, and to make some little contribution to the removal of the obstacles which existing doubts on that point have caused to that full, generous, and ready co-operation which it is I am certain her anxiety and that of her peoples to give today to a good cause.

The essential matters on which a clarification of the position is beyond any question desired are—

*First.*—What are the objectives of His Majesty's Government in the war? To what extent are they of such a character that India with her long history and great traditions can, with a clear conscience, associate herself with them?

*Second.*—What is the future that is contemplated in the constitutional sphere for the Indian Continent? What are the intentions of His Majesty's Government? Is it possible to define those intentions more precisely and in such a manner as to leave the world in no doubt as to the ultimate status envisaged for India as far as the British Commonwealth is concerned?

*Third.*—In what way can the desire of India and of Indian public opinion for a closer association, and an effective association, with the prosecution of the war best be satisfied?

Let me deal with these questions in the order in which I have stated them. Let me in the first place consider to what extent in existing conditions and at this stage in the development of the campaign in which we are engaged any positive and satisfactory answer admits of being given to the demand for a more precise definition of our objectives. In endeavouring to answer that question I do not propose to touch on the question of our objectives for India. That is a matter which I will deal with separately in answering the second question which I have mentioned above. His Majesty's Government have not themselves yet defined with any ultimate precision their detailed objectives in the prosecution of the war. It is obvious that such a definition come only at a later stage in the campaign, and that when it does come, it cannot be a statement of the aims of any single ally. There may be many changes in the world position and in the situation that confronts us before the war comes to an end, and much must depend on the circumstances in which it does come to an end, and on the intervening course of the campaign.

'The experience of all history shows in these circumstances the unwisdom and the impracticability of precise definition at so early a stage as that which we have now reached. But the fact that, for the reasons I have given, precise definition is not practicable does not mean, as I see it, that there is any real doubt, or any uncertainty, in the minds of the public, whether in India or in the United Kingdom or in any allied country, as to the motives which have actuated us in entering into the war, and consequently the broad general objectives which we have before us in the campaign which is now being waged. We are fighting to resist aggression whether directed against ourselves or others. Our general aims have been stated by the Prime Minister within the last few days as follows:—We are seeking no material advantage for ourselves. We are not aiming only at victory, but looking beyond it to laying a foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation. We, like all the peoples of Europe, long for peace; but it must be a real and settled peace, not an uneasy truce interrupted by constant alarms and threats. This statement, I think, clearly establishes the nature of the cause for which we are fighting, and justifies, if justification is needed, the extension by India of her moral support and her goodwill to the prosecution of that cause.

Let me turn now to the second question which has been put to me—the question of India's future and of the lines of her constitutional development. That is a question, I am certain in the light of my conversations, which is of the greatest and most acute interest to all parties and all sections of opinion in this country. As matters stand today, the constitutional position of India and the policy of His Majesty's Government are governed by the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. Part III of the Act, which provides for the conferment of Provincial Autonomy on the Provinces of British India, has been implemented. For nearly 2½ years now the Provinces have been conducting their own affairs under the scheme of the Act. That they have done so, on the whole,

with great success, even if now and then difficulties have arisen, no one can question. Whatever the political party in power in those Provinces all can look with satisfaction on a distinguished record of public achievement during the last 2½ years. The experience that they have had has shown beyond any question that whatever minor problems the application of the scheme of the Act may have presented, whatever difficulties may have confronted us in the operation of the Act from time to time in the provincial sphere, the scheme of the Act is essentially sound, and that it transfers great power and gives great opportunities to popularly elected governments dependent on the support of a majority in their legislatures.

The second stage contemplated by the Act was the re-constitution of the Central Government on such a basis as to achieve the essential goal of Indian unity. The method contemplated for that purpose was the achievement of a Federation of All-India, in which the representatives of all political parties in British India would, together with the Rulers of the Indian States, form a unified Government of India as a whole. I am only too conscious of the severity of the criticisms that have been advanced from many different points of view against the federal scheme and against the arrangements embodied in Part II of the Act. I will say today no more than that, having myself had so close a familiarity not only with the framing of the provisions, but with the preliminary work which has been done with a view to putting them into force, I have throughout believed that the federal scheme in its operation would have turned out as satisfactorily, as broadly speaking, we can all of us regard the scheme of Provincial Autonomy as having turned out. I will not dilate on that subject today, for our work in connection with the federal scheme has been suspended. But in reaffirming as I do my belief in the essential soundness of the federal aspects of the Act of 1935, I do so with the greater emphasis because of the evidence which the federal provisions of the Act constitute of the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to achieve, with the minimum of delay, and on the basis which appears to represent the greatest amount of

agreement between the various parties and interests affected, the unity of India, and to advance beyond a further and a most important milestone on the road to India's goal.

Such being the background against which we are working, what are the intentions and aims of His Majesty's Government in relation to India? I cannot do better in reply to that question than to refer to the statement made on behalf of His Majesty's Government, and with their full authority, by the late Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on the 6th February 1935. That statement makes the position clear beyond a shadow of doubt. It refers to the pledge given in the Preamble of the Act of 1919, and it makes it clear that it was no part of the plan of His Majesty's Government to repeal that pledge. It confirms equally the interpretation placed in 1929 by Lord Irwin, as Viceroy, again on the authority of the Government of the day, on that Preamble, that "the natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status." I need not dilate on the words of that statement. They are clear and positive. They are enshrined in the parliamentary record. They stand as a definite and categorical exposition of the policy of His Majesty's Government today, and of their intentions today in this end, the future constitutional development and position of India. I would add only that the Instrument of Instructions issued to me as Governor-General by His Majesty the King Emperor in May 1937 lays upon me as a Governor-General a direction so to exercise the trust which His Majesty has reposed in me "that the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within our Empire may be furthered to the end that India may attain its due place among our Dominions."

That is the policy and that is the position. Those are the intentions of His Majesty's Government. Let me go on to say another word about the Act of 1935. That Act was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which it was possible to obtain at the time when it was framed. It was based, as is well known to all of us, on the common labours of British and Indian statesmen, and of represen-

tatives of British India as well as of the Indian States over a long period of years. All parties were at one stage or other closely associated with those deliberations. And I can speak from personal experience when I bear tribute to the extreme anxiety of all those of us on whom, in the Joint Select Committee, there fell the more particular responsibility for devising proposals for the consideration of Parliament, to ensure that the fullest account had been taken of all interests; of the views of all political parties; and that nothing had been left undone to ensure that the outcome of our labours reflected the greatest measure of agreement practicable in the conditions that confronted us.

Be that as it may, His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future federal Government of India, and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State, to which I have just referred, it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of the then circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate. And I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests, in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable.

I have I trust, in what I have just said, made clear that the intention and the anxiety of His Majesty's Government is, as stated in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General, to further the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the Empire to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions. The scheme of Government embodied in the Act of 1935 was designed as an essential stage in that process. But I have made clear in what I have just said that His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views. And

whether Indian or European in this country, that the largest measure of agreement practicable should be achieved. With the best will in the world, progress must be conditioned by practical considerations. I am convinced myself, if I may say so with the utmost emphasis, that, having regard to the extent of agreement which in fact exists in the constitutional field, and on this most difficult and important question of the nature of the arrangement to be made for expediting and facilitating the attainment by India of her full status, there is nothing to be gained by phrases which, widely and generally expressed, contemplate a state of things which is unlikely to stand at the present point of political development the test of practical application or to result in that unified effort by all parties and all communities in India on the basis of which alone India can hope to go forward as one and to occupy the place to which her history and her destinies entitle her. I would ask that these words of caution be not taken as indicating any lack of sympathy on the part of His Majesty's Government for the aspirations of India, or any indifference to the pace of her advance: and I would repeat that His Majesty's Government are but concerned to use their best endeavours, now as in the past, to bring about that measure of agreement and understanding between all parties and all interests in this country which is so essential a condition of progress towards India's goal.

I turn now to the arrangements to be made to secure the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war. India's contribution has already been great, great to a degree which has impressed the imagination of the world. At the head of the list I would put the contribution which India has made in spiritual, and not in material, terms,—the support of her peoples for a cause which they can regard as a good and a righteous cause. In the material field equally her contribution is already most significant, and may be greater still. And in the circumstances the desire, the anxiety, of public opinion in India to be associated with the conduct of the



I would make it clear, too, that it will be their object, as at all times in the past it has been, to spare no pains to further agreement by any means in their power in the hope of contributing to the ordered and harmonious progress of India towards her goal. Let me in that connection add that in the conversations I have had, representatives of the minorities have urged most strongly on me the necessity of a clear assurance that full weight would be given to their views and to their interests in any modifications that may be contemplated. On that I need say no more than that, over more than a decade, at the three Round Table Conferences, and at the Joint Select Committee, His Majesty's Government consulted with and had the assistance of the advice of representatives of all parties and all interests in this country. It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh, or to modify in any respect, any important part of India's future Constitution without again taking counsel with those who have in the recent past been so closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with Parliament.

That some even more extensive scheme than I have mentioned, some even more widely phrased indication of the intentions of His Majesty's Government, is desired in certain quarters in this country, I am fully aware from the conversations I have had during these last few weeks. That that is a desire held with sincerity, and that those who hold it are convinced that it is in the manner in question that the future progress and development of India and the expressed intentions of His Majesty's Government can best be fulfilled, I fully and readily accept. I would utter one word only of caution. And if I say that the situation must be faced in terms of world politics and of political realities in this country, I do so from no lack of sympathy, and no lack of appreciation of the motives that weigh with the people of India and the ideals that appeal to them. But I would urge that it is essential in matters of this nature, affecting the future of tens of millions of people, affecting the relations of the great communities, affecting the Princes of India, affecting the immense commercial and industrial enterprises,

whether Indian or European in this country, that the largest measure of agreement practicable should be achieved. With the best will in the world, progress must be conditioned by practical considerations. I am convinced myself, if I may say so with the utmost emphasis, that, having regard to the extent of agreement which in fact exists in the constitutional field, and on this most difficult and important question of the nature of the arrangement to be made for expediting and facilitating the attainment by India of her full status, there is nothing to be gained by phrases which, widely and generally expressed, contemplate a state of things which is unlikely to stand at the present point of political development the test of practical application or to result in that unified effort by all parties and all communities in India on the basis of which alone India can hope to go forward as one and to occupy the place to which her history and her destinies entitle her. I would ask that these words of caution be not taken as indicating any lack of sympathy on the part of His Majesty's Government for the aspirations of India, or any indifference to the pace of her advance: and I would repeat that His Majesty's Government are but concerned to use their best endeavours, now as in the past, to bring about that measure of agreement and understanding between all parties and all interests in this country which is so essential a condition of progress towards India's goal.

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out felt the greatest sympathy. In the circumstances I have described, the desirability of steps to ensure that leaders of public opinion should be in the closest touch with developments is of the first importance.

I have discussed with the utmost frankness with the leaders of the various parties who have been good enough to come to see me in connection with the constitutional position, by what machinery we could best give effect to this desire. We have examined a variety of expedients, and there has been no hesitation on the part of any of us in assessing the advantages and the disadvantages presented by each of them. I do not propose today to examine those various alternatives in particular detail. I will only say that in the light of my conversations and of the views (by no means, always in accord) of representatives of the great parties and of the Princes I am of opinion that the right solution would be the establishment of a consultative group, representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes, over which the Governor-General would himself preside, which would be summoned at his invitation, and which would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities.

This group, for practical reasons, would inevitably be limited in size. But His Majesty's Government contemplate that it should be fully representative, and in particular that its personnel should be drawn by the Governor-General from panels prepared by the various major political parties, from which a selection of individuals to attend meetings of the group would be made by the Governor-General. I hope in the very near future to enter into consultation with political leaders and with the Princes on this question. I have no doubt, whatever that an arrangement of this nature will most materially contribute to associating the Indian States and British India with the steps which are being taken for the prosecution of the war and with the arrangements that are being made in that connection: and I am confident, too, that in an asso-

ciation of this nature of representatives of all parties and all interests there lies the germ of that fuller and broader association of all points of view in this country which contain in it the seeds of such advantage for the future of India as a whole.

When I spoke to the Central Legislature a month ago, I made an appeal for unity. I would repeat that appeal today. It is my earnest hope that the explanations I have given will have contributed materially to the removal of misunderstandings. Even if on certain points I have not, to my knowledge, been able to give assurances so comprehensive as those which would I know have been welcomed in certain political quarters in India, I would urge insistently that this is not a moment at which to risk the splitting of the unity of India on the rock of particular phrases, and I would press that we should continue to aim at the unity of India even if differences of greater or less significance continue to exist. We live in difficult and anxious days. Great ideals are in issue. Dangers real and imminent face our civilization. Those dangers are as real and as imminent in the case of India as of any other member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Those ideals are as precious to India as to any country in the Empire or in the world. At this grave moment in the destinies of nations, my prayer to all parties would be not to dissociate themselves from the common effort, but to lend their co-operation and their assistance in the prosecution of the war. There could be no more decisive proof of India's fidelity to her best traditions than the full use of the opportunities afforded to her by the war for concerted endeavour. The ideals we have set before us, the objects to secure which we are engaged in the present struggle, are such as to command widespread sympathy and widespread support in India. They are in harmony with her past history and her highest traditions. It is my hope that in the grave juncture which we face India will go forward as a united country in support of a common cause."

## STATEMENTS ON THE VICEREGAL DECLARATION

*Oct. 18, 1939.*

By Mahatma Gandhi

The Viceregal declaration is profoundly disappointing. It would have been better if the British Government had declined to make any declaration whatsoever. The long statement made by the Viceroy simply shows that the old policy of 'divide and rule' is to continue. So far, as I can see, the Congress will be no party to it, nor can the India of Congress conception be a partner with Britain in her war with Herr Hitler. The Indian declaration shows clearly that there is to be no democracy for India, if Britain can prevent it. Another Round Table Conference is promised at the end of the War. Like its predecessor it is bound to fail. The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone. What the future has in store for India, I dare not foretell. I do not blame the Viceroy or the leaders of Britain for the unfortunate result. The Congress will have to go into wilderness again before it becomes strong and pure enough to reach its objective. I have no doubt that Congressmen will await the Working Committee's decision.

By Congress President

The Viceroy's announcement is disappointing to the extreme but not at all surprising. Its tragedy is that sympathy and goodwill in favour of Great Britain should have been allowed to dissipate leaving behind once again jetsam and flotsam of suspicion and distrust and ill-feeling. The Viceroy refers to and confirms the past announcements regarding the goal of British policy in India and promises a Round Table Conference at the end of the war as preliminary to the revision of the Government of India Act of 1935. The announcement of 1929 was made immediate before the Lahore Congress which considered it to be so inadequate and unsatisfactory as to justify a change in the Congress creed fixing complete independence of India as the object of the Congress and launching a campaign of civil disobedience which lasted from

1930-34. Sir Samuel Hoare's statement was made to satisfy people who had insisted on the incorporation of the goal of Dominion Status in the Act of 1935, which the British Government, and the Parliament deliberately refused to incorporate in the Act. In spite of these declarations and other the Congress rejected the Act of 1935. It was not hope that the reiteration of those very announcements which has been repeated without reserve—although they are now made in polite and consolidatory language, would satisfy any one and the Viceroy has anticipated the reception which his announcement is likely to get. We have had experience of round table conferences, their interminable discussions, their window-dressing, their representative character and above all their none too concealed attempt to take advantage of such differences and deficiencies as exist in this country, for most of which the British Government are themselves responsible.

There is another important announcement regarding the formation of a Consultative Group consisting of representatives elected by the Viceroy from amongst a panel nominated by different organisations. Its functions, as the name suggests, would be consultative. It will have no power to come to a decision and will in effect have no other function than giving moral support to the decisions taken by others. There is no room now left for any one to doubt that British policy remains what it has always been and that all talk about democracy and resistance to aggression is not meant to apply to India.

Indeed the Prime Minister declared more than once that the war aim is protection of freedom of European countries and establishment of peace in Europe based on status quo. In a war fought for this purpose India can have no interest and victory for Britain can only imply continuance of the present condition not only for India but also for other exploited and suppressed people outside Europe. India will be false to her interest and untrue to the best interest of other suppressed nationalities if she helps imperialism to strengthen itself. It is still open to Britain to rule without her consent and even expect material help for the conduct of war, but Great

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Britain shall not have that spiritual support of India of which the Viceroy has spoken in such eloquent terms. The announcement has effectively destroyed the foundation for any such moral and spiritual support and war, as now appears to every one has always been a war for strengthening of Britain's Imperial position in her possession. Much advertised high aims are crumbled into dust at the first touch of reality. I hope that Congressmen will await with patience and determination the reply of the Working Committee and conduct themselves with restraint and dignity.

By Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru jointly.

We have read the Viceroy's statement with deep regret. If this is the final answer of the British Government to the people of India, then, there is no common ground between the two and our path diverge completely.

The whole statement is a complete repudiation of all that India stands for, nationally and internationally. It is a statement which would have been out of date twenty years ago; today it has absolutely no relation to reality. There is no mention in it of independence, freedom, democracy or self-determination; no attempt even to justify the dragooning of India into the war without reference to her people and her being forced to join an adventure for objectives which are not hers. These objectives appear clearly from the Viceroy's statement to be the preservation and maintenance of the British imperial and financial structure in India and abroad.

The "better international system", to which the British Premier has referred, is evidently meant to preserve and strengthen this structure. Apart from this, it relates, according to him, to the peoples of Europe and not to Asia or Africa. India continues where she is; the colonies remain where they are; imperialism is still meant to flourish.

All this seems to follow from the Viceroy's statement and if this is the aim of the war it is difficult to imagine that even the British Government, living as it does in an

age that is past and done with, can expect any self-respecting Indian to co-operate with it.

The hand of friendship that the Congress had extended to the British people in this hour of world crisis has been spurned by their Government. How far that Government represents them, it is for them to say, but we have to consider the Viceroy's statement as England's reply to India.

What our next steps should be it would be premature and improper for us to say at this stage. That is for the Working Committee to decide and the Committee is meeting for that purpose soon. The hour is a grave one and requires all our united wisdom and courage and discipline and mutual forbearance. Let us bear ourselves with dignity and restraint and hold together in the cause of India's freedom.

### LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*Oct. 18, 1939*

In the course of his statement in the House of Lords, Lord Zetland said :

It will perhaps be for the convenience of your lordships if I preface what I have to say with a brief objective account of events in India immediately preceding and following the invasion of Poland by Germany. On the outbreak of the war one thing was immediately made apparent and that was that the overwhelming feeling of the Indian people from one end of the country to the other was one of violent protest against the outrage committed by the Nazi Government against decencies of civilised existence and of deep detestation of all that the international methods associated with the name of Hitler stands for and that feeling, as I pointed out in the course of a few words, which I addressed to your lordships on September 26, found expression in spontaneous support from men and women of all creeds and classes and communities.

Yet while this was so, it was a fact that the most numerous and most powerful political party in India, the Indian National Congress, had committed itself some time earlier to a specific attitude in the event of war breaking out in which Great Britain was involved. Their attitude was further defined when early in August they took exception to certain precautionary methods taken by His Majesty's Government and the Government of India in pursuance of their obligation to secure the safety of India, and as an indication of their disapproval of the action taken, they called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the forthcoming session.

The particular measure to which exception was taken was the despatch of external defence troops from India to Egypt and Aden and Singapore. This action was taken on the urgent advice of the highest naval and military authorities. The situation, at that time, was such that the possibility of a threat to the safety of India, both from west and from east, could not be excluded and from the military point of view it was essential that the western and eastern approaches to India should be adequately defended. It would clearly have been the height of folly to have given the world by discussion in the legislature advance notice of our military dispositions.

Nevertheless, both the Viceroy and I were anxious to take leaders of political parties in India into our confidence and our plans were, therefore, communicated to the leaders of political parties in the Assembly, including, of course, the Congress Party.

So much for the precautionary measures, to which exception was subsequently taken. I now come to the outbreak of war. For a long time past, the Viceroy with my full knowledge and approval has been in close touch with the most outstanding figure on the Indian political stage—Mahatma Gandhi; and here may I pause for a moment to pay a personal tribute to Mr. Gandhi, known to and beloved by peoples of India for the readiness, which he has shown not only to interpret to us the viewpoint

and aspirations of the Congress, but to endeavour to appreciate in his turn our viewpoint and difficulties with which we have had to grapple and furthermore, for the help which he has most willingly given us in our endeavours to surmount them.

This being so, it was natural that immediately on the outbreak of war the Viceroy should have invited Mr. Gandhi to take counsel with him. The invitation was promptly accepted and within forty-eight hours of the declaration of war they were in close consultation. The outcome is known, for Mr. Gandhi has himself stated publicly that, speaking in his purely personal capacity—for he was not authorised to speak for the Congress—his view was that in the struggle upon which this country had entered, India should give us unconditional support. Thereafter, the Working Committee of the Congress met at Wardha to consider the situation and they invited to their Council Room not only members of the Working Committee but others, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Subhas Bose.

It was not, however, until September 15, that the result of their deliberations was made known in the form of a comprehensive statement. Such a document, setting forth as it did the views of the most powerful political party in India, called for the most careful consideration. Your lordships may study it for yourselves, for you will find it printed as an annex to the Viceroy's statement in the White Paper and it is sufficient for my purpose at the moment to say that, broadly speaking, the effect of it was, while condemning unequivocally the action of the German Government, to make it clear before they, as a party, decide to give us their support, they would wish to be informed of our war aims and in particular, how those aims would apply to India.

Meanwhile, the Working Committee, of the next most numerous and powerful political party in India—the All-India Muslim League, whose president, Mr. Jinnah had also been in consultation with the Viceroy—met to take stock of the situation and issued a statement on Septem-

ber 18, from which it was apparent that while Muslims, equally with the Congress, unhesitatingly condemned aggression, of which the Nazi Government had been guilty, there was between their view and that of the Congress regarding the internal political situation a substantial divergence. Here, again, I need not enter into detail, for the text of this statement also will be found in the White Paper.

The Viceroy has been at pains to acquaint himself fully with the view of these two organisations by personal discussion with their leaders. But his consultations did not stop there, for there were the Princes, who from the first have thrown their whole weight into the scale against aggression and who had been in close contact with the Viceroy through the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and there was the National Liberal Federation of India, who, as will be seen by reference to their statement printed in the White Paper, had already made their attitude towards war plain and had offered unconditional support to Great Britain. And over and above these, there were the leaders of other communities and interests such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Schedule Castes, Sikhs and Parsees, to mention only some of them, who instantly made it clear that their views and interests should not be left out of account in the discussions that were in progress.

There, then, you have the background of the Indian picture, what of the main features of the picture itself? They may be said to be two in number first, the desire on the part of all communities to see the overthrow of the menace, which overshadows Europe in particular and the world in general and secondly, the desire for self expression, which takes the form, in the domain of politics, of self-government on a democratic basis. But here there are qualifications, for there is on the part of minorities insistent demand for safeguards against consequences which, rightly or wrongly, it is feared, might result from unfettered domination of the majority.

And herein is to be found the root cause of our difficulties—difficulties which those who are not burdened

with the responsibility which rests upon His Majesty's Government and the Government of India, may—and frequently do—discount, but which His Majesty's Government themselves cannot ignore. For those who confine their gaze to one part only of the picture, the problem of self-government for India may appear to be a comparatively simple one, but for those who, like His Majesty's Government have to view the picture as a whole, this is far from being the case. I shall have something to say on that aspect of the case before I resume my seat.

Meanwhile, let me say that it is in our view eminently desirable that consultations with the leaders of public opinion in India, which the Viceroy has initiated since the outbreak of War—I think he has seen more than fifty leaders—should not only be maintained, but should be provided for by some more definite machinery. The means proposed for the achievement of that object are set out by the Viceroy in his statement. Briefly stated, what we have in mind is a broadly based consultative body, whose personnel would be drawn by the Viceroy from panels of individuals nominated by various political parties and interests.

From this main body the Viceroy, who would himself preside over its deliberations, would summon members to attend particular meetings at which, according to the business to be taken into consideration, their presence was desirable. Such a body would serve as a 'liaison' between the Government and the people since it would have imparted to it views and proposals of the Government and in its turn would be in a position to give free and frank expression to its opinions on all matters laid before it. These might well include matters which, in times of war, it would be inconvenient to discuss in a more public manner.

Such a scheme would possess this further advantage; that those concerned, representing different parties, communities and interests would be in close association not only with the Viceroy but also with one another and it would be my hope that the association and collaboration —

in so great an enterprise as the conduct of war would tend gradually to lessen the differences and emphasise the extent of the common interest of all those taking part in it and of those whom they represent.

I should like, in conclusion, to say a few words of a more general character. Responsible self-government for India is the goal set forth by Parliament in the Preamble of the Act of 1919; and it was with the full authority of the Government of the day that my noble friend the Foreign Secretary stated ten years later that the natural issue of India's progress as here contemplated—that is to say, in the Preamble of the Act of 1919—was the attainment of Dominion Status.

From that objective we never have had and have not now the smallest intention of departing. The purpose of the Act of 1935 was to provide that machinery whereby the people of India might acquire that measure of political unity, which surely is the pre-requisite to the attainment by them of their eventual goal. Much has been said in disparagement of the measure, yet it should not be forgotten that it was the outcome of immense labour on the part of Indians and Britons alike and was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which was then obtainable.

And I would add this that even in the case of a written constitution provisions of the Statute are no more than the bony skeleton of a structure; flesh and blood, which give it life and vigour are added day by day by those engaged in working it. Within the framework practices take root and conventions grow up. The constitution becomes a living and growing organism deriving form and substance from its environment. The truth of that has been demonstrated by the two years' working of the Act in so far as it affects the provinces of British India, as I feel sure the Ministers of today, one of whom a little more than two years ago rejected it as of little worth, will be willing to admit. I believe that similar experience of the working of the federal provisions of the Act would be attended by similar results.

But if, at the end of the upheaval caused by the war, when the circumstances may well differ markedly from

what they are to-day, there is a desire on the part of those concerned for modifications of particular features of the plan, then His Majesty's Government declare now that they will in such circumstances be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may then seem desirable.

I say then because, in my view, it is not practicable, nor do I believe that it would be in the true interest of the people of India themselves to endeavour, while we are all labouring under the strain and stress of a life-and-death struggle to embark upon the task of immense complexity and one, moreover, which would inevitably give rise to no little controversy in India itself.

And that brings me back to what I said earlier in the course of my remarks as to the root cause of the difficulties in the domain of constitutional building in India. What we have to work for is elimination of those communal antagonisms which still militate against the political unity of India.

You cannot abolish them by merely closing your eyes to their existence. You must face them and search for means to remove their underlying forces. I believe that the menace, which now confronts all of us Englishmen, Hindus, Muslims, Princes and peoples alike, may aid us to achieve what hitherto has eluded our grasp. Can we not, standing shoulder to shoulder for a common purpose, be banded together in the comradeship of arms and learn to view in truer perspective against the background of the supreme and imminent peril—for what would it profit India if the force of aggression and of evil emerged victorious from this war—those internal and domestic differences which have hitherto raised such formidable obstacles along the road to that goal towards which the peoples of both countries have determined to travel.

This then is my appeal to the peoples of India that in comradeship with us while presenting a united front



to the forces ranged against us they strive after that agreement among themselves without which they will surely fail to achieve that unity, which is an essential of nationhood of which those with vision among her leaders have long dreamed and which must surely be the crowning achievement of long and intimate political relationship between the peoples of Great Britain and India.

### ZETLAND'S REPLY

Lord Zetland replying to the debate said that he would like to associate himself whole-heartedly with the many expressions of admiration of the Viceroy's conduct of his office, which had fallen from so many lips. No man, said Lord Zetland, could have brought to his task greater sympathy, greater energy and to some extent, greater knowledge of the immediate problems of India, with which he had had to grapple.

Of course, there can be no going back in the constitutional field in India. We have been going steadily forward and I was little surprised when I heard Lord Sankey speak as it seemed to me in somewhat disparaging terms that we had set up as our goal in India the attainment of Dominion Status.

Surely Lord Sankey who was himself so largely concerned with the framing particularly of the Federal provisions of the Act of 1935 must realise that these things cannot be unduly hurried, that there are many interests in India, which must be taken into account and I should have thought that the Act of 1935 itself showed considerable advance along the road towards the goal, which we have set ourselves.

Lord Sankey suggested that the Premiers of Provinces should be members of the group. On their merits no one would welcome more warmly than I their presence on such a body.

I cannot help thinking that Lord Sankey must have forgotten a little the geographical conditions of India. How are the Prime Ministers of these various Provinces, some of them two or three days' journey by train from

Delhi, going to discharge their onerous functions, which will devolve upon them in their own Provinces, if they are to meet at Delhi as members of this Consultative Committee? I do not think, it would be a practical proposition, warmly as I would welcome it, if it were.

With regard to the composition of the proposed Committee, some of you have spoken as if it were assumed that it was going to be a nominated body. Not at all. The panels are either going to be nominated or elected by political parties themselves and when I said that the Viceroy would invite from time to time members, whose names occurred on the panels, what I had in mind was the difficulty in a country like India of always being able to secure the whole of a particular group. There might be, for example, a representative of the Congress, whose habitual place of residence was the Presidency of Madras. When such a man was in Delhi he could, of course, serve on the Committee, but if he were in Madras and the Committee were called to consider matters, it would in all probability be impossible for him to attend. That is why the suggestion is made that the panels should constitute a comparatively large body on which the Viceroy would from time to time be able to draw for discussion of a particular subject. On page nine of the White Paper, the Viceroy says: "I hope in the near future to enter into consultation with political leaders in connection with this Consultative Group."

With regard to its functions, I think perhaps the fact has been a little overlooked that the Legislative Assembly will, of course, continue to be in existence. This group is not in any sense intended to displace the Legislative Assembly, where matters can be discussed freely and openly. This is rather a group of people representing different schools of political thought in India whom the Viceroy can take into his confidence, with whom he can frankly and freely discuss matters connected with the conduct of the war and war activities and such matters that in times of war it might be inappropriate to discuss in a more public manner.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

*Wardha, Oct. 22 & 23, 1939.*

The Committee considered the Viceroy's declaration about British War Aims and India and passed the following resolution :—

“The Working Committee is of opinion that the Viceroy's statement in answer to the Congress invitation for a clear declaration of the British war aims, particularly in their application to India, is wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who were anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining India's independence. This invitation was made not only on behalf of the people of India, but for millions of people all over the world, who were weary of war and violence, and Fascist and Imperialist systems which exploited nations and peoples and were ultimately the causes of war, and who yearned for a new order of peace and freedom. The Viceregal statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy. The Committee regard the mention of the differences among several parties as a screen to hide the true intention of Great Britain. What the Committee had asked for was a declaration of war aims as a test of Britain's *bona fides* regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups. The Congress has always stood for the amplest guarantee of the rights of minorities. The freedom the Congress claimed was not for the Congress or any particular group or community, but for the nation and for all communities in India that go to build that nation. The only way to establish this freedom and to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole is through a democratic process which gives full opportunity to all. The committee must, therefore, regard the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate. In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step

in this direction the Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations.

"The Committee earnestly appeal to the nation to end all internal controversies in this hour of great crisis and call upon all Congress Committees and congressmen generally to be prepared for all developments and eventualities, and to show restraint of word and deed so that nothing may be said or done which is not in keeping with India's honour or the principles for which the Congress stands. The Committee warn Congressmen against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strikes and the like. The Committee will watch the situation and the activities of the British Government in India, and will not hesitate to guide the country to take further steps whenever the necessity for this arises. The Committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that a programme of resistance, commensurate with the magnitude of the issue before the country, requires perfect discipline within Congress ranks and the consolidation of the Congress organisation.

"The Working Committee realise that the non-violent resistance offered by the Congress in the past has sometimes been mixed with violence. The Committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that any resistance that may have to be offered must be purged of all violence and to remind them of the pledges taken to this effect as early as 1921 during the Congress Session at Ahmedabad and repeated on many subsequent occasions."

### INSTRUCTIONS TO MINISTRIES AND LEGISLATIVE PARTIES

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee with the approval of the Working Committee issued the following instructions for the guidance of Ministries and Congress parties in the Congress provinces :—

"The resolution of the Working Committee calls upon Congress Provincial Governments to tender their resignation. These resignations should be given after the Assembly meetings which have been convened for the

purpose of discussing such urgent business as may be pending but it is expected that resignations will be tendered by October 31, 1939.

"The Central Provinces and Orissa Assemblies have been convened to meet at the beginning of November and the Provincial Governments in these provinces will remain in office till after this meeting.

"Speakers and Deputy-Speakers and members of the Assemblies, Presidents and members of the Councils are expected to retain their offices and seats. Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are the only persons who are at present expected to resign.

"With regard to the resolution to be moved in the Assemblies on war aims, suitable amendments should be made in view of the new developments."

## SIR SAMUEL HOARE'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*October 26, 1939.*

*( Mr. Wedgwood Benn raised a debate on India in the House of Commons on October 26 and Sir Samuel was the principal spokesman on behalf of His Majesty's Government )*

Sir Samuel Hoare said : "Mr. Wedgwood Benn and I have very often confronted each other in the field of Indian debate. We have sometimes disagreed, and very strongly disagreed, but we have sometimes agreed. To-night in the debate that should assuage rather than stimulate bitterness, let us for a few moments look back upon the occasions on which we have agreed. I very well remember one of them when he and I, some eight or nine years ago in this House, were defending Lord Irwin from criticisms of those who said he ought not to have had conversations with Mr. Gandhī.

"Mr. Benn and I took the view, and I believe we take it still," continued Sir Samuel, "that when political opponents meet, it is better not to regard Government as

a holy of holies into which only the orthodox dare enter. I am sure that he and I are agreed that today it is a matter of satisfaction that the Viceroy should see leaders of the principal parties concerned, even most extreme leaders, even my fellow old Harrovian, Pandit Nehru. Let me say in passing what a remarkable institution must be my old school, which in the course of a single generation has produced Lord Baldwin, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the present First Lord of the Admiralty. I must not be drawn aside into meditations upon the Old School Tie, but must go back, and I do so with great pleasure, to the eloquent, sympathetic and helpful speech to which we have just listened.

"Since Mr. Wedgwood Benn and I last took part in these Indian debates, many events of staggering importance have taken place in the world. Catastrophes have come upon us; hopes have been frustrated; disillusionment has been common; evil has triumphed in many parts of the habitable globe. It has been a black picture, but black as that picture has been, there have at any rate been some bright corners.

"There has been India. In the world of tumult, there has been this great sub-continent of 350,000,000 souls at peace within its boundaries. At a time when democracies were being destroyed in Europe, we have seen eleven great Democratic Governments come into being in India and join their forces with the democratic peoples of the world. These ought surely to be grounds for great satisfaction to every member of the House.

"Four years ago, there were some who honestly thought that provincial government would be a failure. They asked us over and over again in the long Indian debates 'will these governments be able to maintain their stability? Will they be able to control their finances? Will they be able, most important of all, to maintain law and order for millions of human beings to whom they will be responsible?'

"I am glad to think that if some of our hopes were dupes, at any rate most of our fears would have proved

to be illars and that today we can claim that in a world in which there have been a great many constitutional crashes in recent years, there stands out this great constitutional success of provincial autonomy in India.

"It was with this background on the Indian achievement that on September 3rd of this year, India and the British Commonwealth of Nations were faced with war. The crisis found India united. It found India united in its determination to resist brute force and in the realisation that that danger was a common danger threatening every part of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"It was in the face of this unity that the Viceroy showed his wholehearted and sincere desire for Indian goodwill and co-operation. It was at this moment that he took the steps with the object of availing himself to the full of this united feeling in India and this common purpose that should bind India and the rest of the countries of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"As Mr. Wedgwood Benn has said, the Viceroy first had a series of interviews with the leaders of Indian opinion and as a result of those interviews he made two definite proposals. The first was rather in the nature of a pledge. It was a clear and definite statement that at the end of the war, there would be a reconsideration of the constitutional problem in the light of the experience of recent years.

"Secondly with a view to availing himself of Indian advice and with the intention of bringing Indian leaders within his confidence, he suggested that a consultative committee should be formed to discuss with him many problems arising out of the war and to bring him into the closest and most constant contact with the trends of Indian opinion.

"I will say a word about both these proposals. The proposal regarding the Consultative Committee was made with the full desire to obtain the greatest possible co-operation with the principal bodies of Indian public opinion. The Congress, admittedly the greatest party in

India, rejected it. Non-Congress India, representing, it must be remembered, many millions of Indians, substantially accepted it.

"It may be asked, would it not have been possible for the Viceroy to have gone further and made some kind of proposal that would have avoided this division of opinion between Congress and non-Congress India? This is the first question, and it is a very important question to which, I would invite the attention of the House.

"If the members are to follow its implications, they must recall to their minds some of the most important discussions that took place over the Government of India Act. They centred round the pledge of Dominion Status and the aim of the Indian policy.

"These pledges, as Mr. Wedgwood Benn has said, were repeated time after time. They were reaffirmed in very precise terms in the speech with which I introduced the second reading of the Government of India Bill. I made it clear, and I make it clear again today, that we stood by Lord Irwin's pledge and that when we spoke of Dominion Status, we meant what we said and did not mean some system of government that deprived India of full status of equality with other members of the British Commonwealth.

"There are no two kinds of Dominion Status as some people seem to think. The Dominion Status that we contemplated was Dominion Status which has been described by Mr. Wedgwood Benn—the Dominion Status of 1926.

"I went on to state that Dominion Status is not a prize that is given to a deserving community but is recognition of facts that actually exist. As soon as these facts exist in India and, in my view, the sooner they exist the better, the aim of our policy will be achieved. If there are difficulties in the way, they are not of our making. They are inherent in the many divisions between the classes and communities in the great sub-continent.

"It must be the aim of Indians themselves to remove these divisions just as it should be our aim to help Indians



in their task. So far are we from wishing to divide and govern that we regard these divisions as a calamity and are ready to do our utmost to remove them.

"We have shown our good faith in the matter. We showed it when we made the Communal Award. At that time supposing we had wished to divide and conquer we might very well have said 'settle your own communal differences first; until you have settled them there can be no constitutional advance.' We did not take that course, but at a great risk to ourselves and in the face of much criticism we made the Communal Award without which provincial autonomy would have been impossible.

"But in spite of our award, these divisions still exist and until they are removed, we have responsibilities to the minorities that we cannot repudiate. That was our position in 1935 and it is our position today. We wish to see these divisions removed, but we shall never get them removed, if we shut our eyes to their existence and refuse to admit that they are there. It is these divisions that have made so difficult the task of setting up responsible government at the Centre and of achieving the great ideal of an all-India federation.

"The Princes are afraid of domination by British India, the Muslims are firmly opposed to a Hindu majority at the centre. The depressed classes and other minorities genuinely believe that responsible government, meaning a government dependent on the Hindu majority, will sacrifice their interests. These anxieties still exist. I wish they did not. But as long as they exist, it is impossible for Government to accept the demand for immediate and full responsibility at the Centre on a particular date.

"If we did so, we should be false to the pledges that time after time we have given in the most solemn words to the Muslims, other minorities and the European community. It may be said 'supposing that full and immediate responsibility at the Centre is impossible, are then not other steps that could be taken to show our good faith and to make clear to India that that goal is just as much in our minds today as it was when we made those pledges four years ago?'

"Mr. Wedgwood Benn himself made a number of these suggestions this afternoon and I will try to deal with them. Firstly, let me disabuse him of the idea which I think he held that we are contemplating in the near future an Imperial War Cabinet in London and that in it India ought to be represented by more than a single representative.

"At present there is no intention to set up an Imperial War Cabinet of that kind. If and when the time comes, I will certainly remember the observations he has made on the subject and I imagine they will be given extremely careful attention."

"Next he spoke on the project that has been discussed more than once before. He asked: Would it not be possible to introduce into the Viceroy's Council political leaders who would hold portfolios in certain of the great departments? As I have said, this is not a new proposal. I remember it being made during the joint discussions of the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

"I think the Leader of the Opposition himself made it at one time. We went fully into it then and at that time we found ourselves confronted by certain difficulties in the way of its adoption. I do not enumerate those difficulties tonight. . I wish to close no door. I wish to explore every possibility within the ambit of the Government of India Act.

"I agree with very much of what Mr. Wedgwood Benn said as to the impossibility of having constitutional reform by stages in war time or contemplating another Government of India Act when we are in the throes of this terrible struggle. I do not elaborate the difficulties that are inherent in a suggestion of this kind.

"He knows them as well as I do, but so far as the British Government are concerned, we see no reason why, provided that difficulties are remembered, this proposal should not be very carefully considered.

"The Congress, in my view, with undue haste has assumed that the Viceroy's Consultative Committee means

nothing; that it is merely a device for the purpose of postponing constitutional advance. The Princes, the Muslims and other parties do not take this view. They believe that a body of this kind can be of real value to India and that if it is set up it will prove to be a further step towards, and not away from, responsible government.

"I feel that the Congress have been too hasty in their repudiation of this proposal. Let them and other political leaders clear up any doubts that they have as to the scope of its working and personnel that would be members of it.

"If they do, I believe they will find that it is the definite intention of the Viceroy to take Indian political leaders into his confidence on many problems that arise out of the conduct of the war and that it is his convinced belief that if Indian leaders of different parties and communities in British India and Indian India meet to discuss these manifold questions, their advice will carry the greatest possible weight with the Indian executive; and, perhaps even more important, that their meetings by bringing together divergent interests will materially help to provide that basis of agreement among Indians themselves which is essential to swift constitutional advance.

"I believe that the great possibilities of consultation of this kind have not been sufficiently appreciated. If they are fully used—and I give an undertaking that the Viceroy is anxious to make the fullest use of them—they may well prove to be the bridge that is needed to carry Indians over the great divide of communal bitterness that at present stands chiefly in the way of constitutional advance. If it be the case that these war-time meetings will make easier constitutional discussions that will take place after the war, what a calamity it would be, if for some reason or other, they were not started.

"Mr. Wedgwood Benn spoke of the discussions that took place in the last war on the subject of the constitution. He mentioned the Montagu-Chelmsford discussions and asked whether it would be possible for discussions of that kind to take place in the course of this war.

"I do not wish to give a final answer but I would point out that in certain respects the situation today differs a good deal from the situation at the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford discussions. The issues had not then become so bitter as they have today. I am thinking more particularly of the communal issue. Further—at any rate at the beginning of a war—it seems to me impossible for discussions of that kind to take place. The Montagu-Chelmsford discussions only took place, I think, three years after the beginning of the last war. As I have said, however, I would rather not give a final answer tonight on the point of that kind.

"Nor, indeed, would I give a final answer on another issue Mr. Wedgwood Benn has raised, namely, that there would be a general election in India. At any rate at the beginning of a war a general election would seem to me to be almost impossible. In India officials are working night and day on war work. Moreover, there would be the fact that communal feelings would, I am sure, be very much aroused in an election and while again I do not want to dogmatise and use terms like 'never' and 'in no circumstances', I would say that as things are today a general election to the Central Legislature would, in my opinion, be impossible.

"To come back to the broad question of consultation. The Viceroy has not tied himself down to the exact methods of this consultation. It is essentially a question to be settled between him and the political leaders. I am able to state that he is ready to discuss the method and details with the leaders and he proposes without delay to send an invitation to meet him for these discussions. Until these and other discussions take place, I claim that it would be a blunder of the first magnitude to take up an irrevocable position. Let the Indian leaders weigh these possibilities. Let them meet and discuss them once again with the Viceroy, and let them also ponder once again upon the alternatives.

"As regards the alternative of direct and immediate responsibility at the Centre, I hope I have convinced the House that in the present circumstances it is impossible

to accept an alternative of that kind. I come to another alternative and I would ask the Indian leaders seriously once again to ponder upon it. I wish, indeed, that I had not to make any reference to it at all. It is the alternative of non-co-operation, an alternative under which the Indian Congress goes its own way and the British Government and the minority communities in India go theirs.

"If it came to this issue, we should have no choice. The King-Emperor's Government must be carried on, and it would be carried on with efficiency, with strength and with justice. We, like any other Government in similar circumstances, would give the Viceroy our full support.

"But let every man of goodwill in India and Great Britain contemplate the waste that such a chapter of non-co-operation would mean. There would be a waste of all our constitutional efforts with these many years of round table conferences, joint select committees and debates in this House. There would be the waste of all the effort we have made to bring to an end the grim chapters of non-co-operation and to make it easier for the Indians and the British to work together towards the solution of these great problems."

"When I went to the India Office I found non-co-operation in full blast. During four years that I was the Secretary of State, like Mr. Wedgwood Benn, who was my predecessor, almost my sole effort was to bring the British and the Indians together and to put an end to this chapter of wasted effort and miserable controversy.

"I hoped that when the Act came into force this chapter would be brought to an end. But it is here now in the face of the greatest crisis that has ever confronted the world—a crisis in which our danger is India's and India's danger ours, in which our determination to set up a new and better order in the world is as great as India's and India's is as great as ours—that there is a grave risk of our drifting into a position in which we shall be wrangling with each other instead of fighting the enemy on the common front.

"I am told—though I can scarcely believe it—that it is being said in some quarters in India that the British Government is searching for a conflict. I repudiate that suggestion, with all the power I have. The British Government wants co-operation and not conflict. The British Government wants to see the aim of its policy is achieved and conditions are realised in which India can take its true place in the British Commonwealth of free peoples.

"Non-co-operation may put the clock back for years. Whether its promoters desire it or not, non-co-operation leads to civil disobedience, to breaches of law and order and to a vicious circle of riot and repression from which we had hoped to have escaped for ever. Until these things actually happen, I will not believe that they are going to happen. I shall continue to believe that, when these great peoples of our own and the peoples of India are faced with a common danger and inspired with a common ideal, non-co-operation of any large section of a community would be a calamity and futility of the first magnitude.

"Millions of Indians in British India and in the States agree with this view. They wish to co-operate with us just as much as we wish to work with them. And the Congress Party itself—I quote the words of Mr. Gandhi spoken three days ago—'wanted to help Britain by giving her moral support, which was its speciality. The Congress would not give this unless it was clear that Britain's morality was wholly sound.'

"I claim that our position is as sound as a bell. In good faith and perfect sincerity, we have started India on the greatest constitutional experiment that the world had ever seen.

"We have long ago set aside imperialistic ambitions. We believe that our mission in the world is not to govern other people but to help other people to govern themselves. It was in this spirit that Parliament passed a series of great Acts which gave the Dominions their free constitution. It was in this spirit that we passed the Government of India Act of 1935, and under which, of

our own free will, we transferred wide authority to the Indian Government. It is in this spirit that we intend to administer the Act and during the war to do our utmost to remove the divisions that stand in the way of its full achievement. And when the war ends—and ends victoriously as a result of the Empire's united efforts—we mean to proceed at once to deal with the constitutional difficulties that have emerged in the experience of recent years. Non-co-operation, and non-co-operation alone will stop this swift and steady progress.

"For those of us who have devoted years of our lives to the building of the new constitution, often at some risk to ourselves; for those of us who are thrilled by the antiquity of the Indian civilisation; for those of us who are proud of the common effort that Indians and we have made to give India a unique position on the Continent of Asia—another chapter of strike, controversy and non-co-operation would come as a great human tragedy. Such a breach in the common front would be a repudiation at one of the gravest moments in the world's history of the call to both of us to resist the aggressor, to fight brute force and to build up a new and better order in the world in which we and Indians can go about our lawful vocations without the peril that now walks by day and night in so many parts of this suffering world."

"It was not—I quote the Prime Minister's weighty words of October 12—with any vindictive purpose that we embarked on the war but simply in defence of freedom. It is not alone freedom of small nations that is at stake. There is also in jeopardy the peaceful existence of Great Britain, the Dominions, India, the rest of the British Empire, France and, indeed, of all freedom-loving nations.

"Whatever may be the issue of the present struggle, and in whatever way it may be brought to a conclusion, the world will not be the same world that we have known before. Looking to the future, we can see deep changes will inevitably leave their mark on every field of men's thought and actions, and if humanity is to guide aright the new forces that will be in operation, all nations will have their part to play.

"In this new world India—perhaps in area the greatest of any Asiatic country—has a great part to play. A great part also in the British Commonwealth of Nations, for it will be an outward and visible sign that with us there is no racial discrimination. It has a great part also to play in the world at large, for India should stand out as a model of a League of Nations from which war has for generations been banished and the rule of law and justice firmly set. With this great hope before us, let us once and for all abandon the barren paths of non-co-operation and help each other to win the war and to win peace and in this double victory to take a great step towards the fruition of India's hopes."

## STATEMENTS ON SIR HOARE'S DECLARATION

By Mahatma Gandhi

Oct. 27, 1939.

I have read Sir Samuel Hoare's speech with the attention it deserves. I appreciate the conciliatory tone behind it. It makes it, therefore, embarrassing for me to produce what may appear to be a jarring note. But even as he speaks from a sense of duty I hope I shall receive the same credit. Has Dominion Status for India any meaning unless it is synonymous with independence? Has the India of his imagination the right to secede from the Commonwealth? I like the declaration that the British have shed imperialistic ambition. Will he allow the people of India to judge for themselves whether in reality that ambition has been shed? If it is, the proof of it should be forthcoming even before India is statutorily declared independent.

When the protection of minorities is pleaded against the declaration required by the Congress, the great pronouncement made by Sir Samuel Hoare sounds unreal. What the Congress has asked is not any sounding of Indian opinion but a declaration of Britain's intention. I have endeavoured to show that there is no such thing as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed Classes there is no minority which is not able



to take care of itself. I observe that Sir Samuel Hoare has mentioned the Europeans also as a minority. The very mention of Europeans, in my opinion, condemns the cry of the interest of minorities. But the protection of minorities, whatever they are, is common cause between the British Government and the Congress. I would like the British Government to remember that there is every prospect of Congress India, to use Sir Samuel's phrase, being a hopeless minority. I like Sir Samuel's division of India into Congress and non-Congress. And if non-Congress India contains not merely the Princes but the people of Princes' India, all the Mussalmans, all those who might be represented by the Hindu Mahasabha and others who refuse to be classified as part of Congress India, it is Congress India which will be in danger of a non-Congress majority. And the Congress has got to make good its position even though it may represent a minority wholly unarmed, partly by outside force but largely by its own will.

#### By Congress President

Interviewed on the House of Commons debate on India, Babu Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President said:

Mahatma Gandhi's statement represents my reaction to Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons and it is hardly necessary for me to say much more. Because we were in doubt whether the freedom and democracy we were asked to help in securing for other countries were intended for us also, we wanted a clear declaration of the British aims and application of them. We have been told in effect that we cannot be promised that freedom and democracy, because we have our own internal differences. The problem of the protection of minorities has been brought out as a difficulty in the way of India's advance to freedom. I do not ignore or minimise it. But may I ask when has the British Government offered to Indians that it will accept a constitution which Indians, including, of course, the minorities will frame for themselves.

Let the British Government throw on Indians the responsibility of producing an agreed constitution without any interference from outside and promise to give statutory effect to it when produced. That will be a genuine offer.

Without it, all talk of protection of minorities looks like an excuse for perpetuating the 'status quo.' The mention of Europeans as a minority recalls the discussions for safeguarding British interests. Indians should not be blamed if they regard the plea in favour of minorities as a screen for protecting British interests.

The Congress insists on a charter of independence to be framed by a constituent assembly of representatives selected on universal franchise. But those who are prepared to accept dominion status may well ask—is dominion status of 1926 mentioned by Sir Samuel Hoare the same or something different from what is provided by the Status of Westminster? Why has he fought shy of mentioning the Statute of Westminster?

Behind all the conciliatory words of Sir Samuel Hoare, there is clear intention not to give full responsible government—not to speak of independence—to India even at the end of the war. Let the British Government realise that India is not to be satisfied by a promise of gradual advance by stages. She wants full freedom and the right to frame her own constitution.

## THE RESOLUTION ON WAR-CRISIS IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

*Oct. Nov. 1939.*

The following resolution was moved by Premiers in the Provincial Assemblies of Madras, Central Provinces, Bihar, U.P., Bombay, Orissa and North West Frontier Province :

"This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments.

"This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the

avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the co-operation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy with effective safe-guards for the Muslim and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to present governance of India.

"This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India's demand this Assembly is of opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with British policy."

The Premiers explained at length the implications of the resolutions in the light of the resolutions passed by the Working Committee from time to time since the outbreak of the war in Europe and the crisis arising therefrom in India. The amendment proposed by the Muslim League party was rejected by the Assemblies.

The Muslim League amendment was as follows:—

"This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to His Majesty's Government that they should, when considering the question of India's constitution either during the duration of the war or after it is concluded, bear in mind that the democratic parliamentary system of Government under the present constitution has failed, being utterly unsuited to the condition and genius of the people and, therefore, apart from the Government of India Act of 1935, the entire problem of India's future constitution should be wholly reviewed and revised de novo and that the British Government should not make any commitment in principle or otherwise without the approval and consent of the All India Muslim League, which alone represents, and can speak, on behalf of the Mussalmans of India, as

well as without the consent of all important minorities and interests."

The resolution as originally moved, was passed by large majorities in the seven provinces. In U.P. and C.P. Assemblies it was passed with slight amendments which were accepted by the Congress party.

## THE NEXT STEP

M. K. Gandhi

*Seagram, 30 10 1939.*

I have never felt the weight of responsibility as heavily as I do today in connection with the present impasse with the British Government. The resignation of Congress ministries was a necessity. But the next step is by no means clear. Congressmen seem to be expecting a big move. Some correspondents tell me, if I only give the call, there will be an India-wide response such as has never been made before. And they assure me that the people will remain non-violent. Beyond their assurance I have no other proof in support of their statement. I have proof in my own possession to the contrary. These columns have contained some of that proof. I cannot identify myself with any civil disobedience unless I am convinced that Congressmen believe in non-violence with all its implications and will follow implicitly the instructions issued from time to time.

Apart from the uncertainty of the observance of non-violence in Congress ranks is the tremendous fact that the Muslim League looks upon the Congress as the enemy of the Muslims. This makes it well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organise successful non-violent revolution through civil disobedience. It will certainly mean Hindu-Muslim riots. Non-violent technique, therefore, demands the reduction of civil disobedience to the lowest term consistent with national self-respect. The offensive will have to be taken by the British Government. In a situation so delicate and unexampled no individual Congressman or even Congress Committee can be allowed to

take the law into their own hands. The Working Committee should alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience.

I have undertaken to guide the Working Committee, but my limitations appal me. My physical condition makes it impossible for me to move about as I used to before. I am therefore cut off from all outward contact with the masses. Even the present Congress workers I do not know personally. I never meet them. My correspondence has to be restricted as much as possible. Therefore, unless Congressmen almost instinctively perceive the duty and the necessity of the preliminary in action I am prescribing, my guidance will be not only useless but it will be harmful. It will create confusion.

I hold the opinion strongly that whilst by their own action the British Government have made it impossible for the Congress to co-operate with them in the prosecution of the war, the Congress must not embarrass them in it's prosecution. I do not desire anarchy in the country. Independence will never come through it. I do not wish for the defeat of the British or, for that matter, of the Germans. The peoples of Europe have been helplessly drawn into the war. But they will soon be awakened from their torpor. This war will not be a war to the finish unless the whole of modern civilisation is to perish. Be that as it may, holding the views I do, I am in no hurry to precipitate civil disobedience'. My prescription to Congressmen, for the time being, is to consolidate the organisation by purging it of all weaknesses. I swear by the old constructive programme of communal unity, removal of untouchability, and the charkha. It is quite clear that non-violence is impossible without the first two. If India's villages are to live and prosper, the charkha must become universal. Rural civilisation is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts. Thus the charkha is the symbol *par excellence* of non-violence. And it can occupy the whole of the time of all Congressmen. It makes no appeal to them, either they have no non-violence in them or I do not know the A.B.C. of non-violence. If my love of the charkha is a weakness

in me, it is so radical as to make me unfit as a general. The wheel is bound up with my scheme of Swaraj, indeed with life itself. All India should know my credentials on the eve of what can become the last and decisive battle for Swaraj.

## H. E. THE VICEROY'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT AND SRI GANDHIJI

*New Delhi Nov. 2, 1929.*

Following correspondence passed between the Congress President and H. E. the Viceroy :—

You will remember that I agreed during our conversation yesterday to let you have in concrete from the proposition which I put to you and the other gentlemen who were present at the meeting, emphasising that I did so with a genuine desire to help, a desire fully shared by His Majesty's Government.

The proposition which I invited you and the other gentlemen present to consider as leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, was that, given the great importance of ensuring harmonious working at the centre, you should enter upon discussions between yourselves with a view to discovering whether you could reach a basis of agreement between yourselves in the provincial field, consequent on which you could let me have proposals which would result in representatives of your two organisations immediately participating in the Central Government as members of my Executive Council. I brought out, too, that in my judgment it ought not to be necessary absolutely to resolve every detail of such differences as may exist in the provinces. What was required, as was remarked in the course of the discussion, was a degree of agreement in respect of the provinces, such as to make it possible for my visitors and the organisations which they represented to put forward a scheme which could be considered for the centre.

I added, in regard to any arrangement at the centre:—  
Firstly, that one would hope that it might be .

take the law into their own hands. The Working Committee should alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience.

I have undertaken to guide the Working Committee but my limitations appal me. My physical condition makes it impossible for me to move about as I used to before. I am therefore cut off from all outward contact with the masses. Even the present Congress workers I do not know personally. I never meet them. My correspondence has to be restricted as much as possible. Therefore, unless Congressmen almost instinctively perceive the duty and the necessity of the preliminary in action I am prescribing, my guidance will be not only useless but it will be harmful. It will create confusion.

I hold the opinion strongly that whilst by their own action the British Government have made it impossible for the Congress to co-operate with them in the prosecution of the war, the Congress must not embarrass them in its prosecution. I do not desire anarchy in the country. Independence will never come through it. I do not wish for the defeat of the British or, for that matter, of the Germans. The peoples of Europe have been helplessly drawn into the war. But they will soon be awakened from their torpor. This war will not be a war to the finish unless the whole of modern civilisation is to perish. Be that as it may, holding the views I do, I am in no hurry to precipitate civil disobedience. My prescription to Congressmen, for the time being, is to consolidate the organisation by purging it of all weaknesses. I swear by the old constructive programme of communal unity, removal of untouchability, and the charkha. It is quite clear that non-violence is impossible without the first two. If India's villages are to live and prosper, the charkha must become universal. Rural civilisation is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts. Thus the charkha is the symbol *par excellence* of non-

Government of India and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the then Secretary of State, it will be necessary to reconsider, in the light of the then circumstances, to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate; and I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with the representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such modifications as may seem desirable.

"I added: I have, in what I have just said, made clear that the intention and the anxiety of His Majesty's Government is, as is stated in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General, to further the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the empire, to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions. The scheme of government embodied in the Act of 1935 was designed as an essential stage in that process. But I have made clear in what I have just said that His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views. And I would make it clear, too, that it will be their object, as at all times in the past it has been, to spare no pains to further agreement, by any means in their power, in the hope of contributing to ordered and harmonious progress of India towards her goal.

"I remarked finally, speaking of the demands of the minorities for an assurance that full weight would be given to their views and interests: It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh or modify in any respect any important part of India's future constitution without again taking counsel with those who, have in the recent past, been closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with Parliament.



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ticable to include also one or possibly more representatives of other important groups, and that that was a question on which I should value your advice when we came to grapple with details. Secondly, that the arrangement which I invited you to consider for the centre would be an ad hoc arrangement for the period of war and would be quite distinct from the much wider question of constitutional reform at the end of the war. And I mentioned that on the last point my declaration had set out the position of His Majesty's Government. I attach a copy of extracts from that declaration, which I brought to the notice of the meeting yesterday. Thirdly, that the position of anyone appointed to my Executive Council as a member of a political party would be identical in privileges and in obligations with that of the existing members of my Council. Fourthly, that the arrangement would be within the general scheme of the existing law. It would admittedly be inevitably a make-shift arrangement for the duration of the campaign.

I brought out that what was required now, if we could get a workable scheme together, was to put it into operation with as little delay as possible, pending the more general review of the whole constitutional position, which His Majesty's Government have expressed their readiness to undertake after the conclusion of the hostilities.

I think the above makes the position clear. Let me in conclusion repeat that, as I said yesterday, I am at any time at your disposal or that of the other gentleman who attended our meeting, whether jointly or singly, to give any assistance in my power in reaching conclusions on these most important matters. I feel certain, as I said yesterday, that the suggestions I have put to you, reflecting as they do a very real and substantial evidence of the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to reach a complete understanding, will receive full and sympathetic consideration from you.

"I stated in the declaration of October 18, 1939: His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future federal

Government of India and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the then Secretary of State, it will be necessary to reconsider, in the light of the then circumstances, to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate; and I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with the representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such modifications as may seem desirable.

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"I remarked finally, speaking of the demands of the minorities for an assurance that full weight would be given to their views and interests: It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh or modify in any respect any important part of India's future constitution without again taking counsel with those who, have in the recent past, been closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with Parliament.

## PRESIDENT'S REPLY TO H. E. THE VICEROY

*New Delhi, Nov. 3, 1939.*

I thank you for your letter of Nov. 2 embodying in a concrete form the proposition which you placed before us when we saw you on Nov. 1. My colleagues and I have given our earnest consideration to it. We have had also the advantage of full talks with Mr. Jinnah but we find ourselves unable to vary the answer we gave you during the interview. At the outset I would like to say that both Gandhiji and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of the war aims without which it is impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal. The present crisis has arisen owing to the outbreak of war in Europe and the action of the British Government in declaring India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people. This crisis is entirely political and is not related to the communal issue in India. It raises vital questions in regard to the war aims of the British Government and the position of India in relation to them.

The Congress Working Committee, as you are aware, issued a lengthy statement on September 14 in which they invited the British Government to declare these war aims and, in particular, how these aims were going to apply to India and, to be given effect to in the present. It was further stated that the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference and should guide their own policy. On October 10 the A.I.C.C. approved of and endorsed this statement and stated that in the declaration to be made by the British Government India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status at present to the largest possible extent. The Committee further added that Indian freedom must be based on democracy, and unity, and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities. Subsequent to this the policy of the British Government was declared

in the Viceregal statement, extracts from which you have been good enough to send me. This statement was considered by the Congress Working Committee soon after and the Committee expressed their opinion that it was unfortunate and wholly unsatisfactory.

As a consequence of this they felt compelled to declare that they were unable to give any support to Great Britain and to call upon the provincial Government in provinces where the Congress is in a majority to tender their resignations. It is worthy of note that the Viceregal declaration of the British policy met with the disapproval of an overwhelming body of opinion in India even outside the Congress. The subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government in Parliament had not made any essential difference to the policy outlined in the Viceregal statement and as you have rightly pointed out that that policy is still governed by the extracts from it that you have kindly sent us.

I am afraid it is quite impossible for us to accept this policy or consider any step to further co-operation unless the policy of the British Government is made clear in a declaration on the lines suggested by the Congress. It has pained us to find the communal questions being dragged in this connection. It has clouded the main issue. It has been repeatedly said on behalf of the Congress that it is our earnest desire to settle all points of communal controversy by agreement and we propose to continue our efforts to this end. But I would point out that this question does not in respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom as suggested above.

Such a declaration applies to the whole of India and not to any particular community and the Constituent Assembly which will frame India's constitution will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation. We are all agreed that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned. The British Government in taking and sharing the burden has, in

our opinion, made a settlement of the question much more difficult than it should have been. It should allay all real anxiety on the part of the British Government when the Congress declares that it contemplates no constitution which does not carry with it protection of real minorities to their satisfaction. It seems to us that a clear declaration of the kind suggested is an essential preliminary to any further consideration of the matter. I should like to add that the recent developments in the European war have made it all the more necessary for a clear enunciation of war aims. If a satisfactory declaration is made a discussion of the proposal made by your Excellency will be appropriate and useful and we shall gladly discuss it with you. It is perhaps unnecessary to state that Gandhiji is in full agreement with this letter. We propose to leave tomorrow evening for Wardha unless your Excellency desires otherwise.

#### MR. JINNAH'S LETTER TO H. E. THE VICEROY

Nov. 4, 1939.

With reference to the joint interview which Mr. Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, president of the Congress, and myself had with you on Nov. 1, and in reply to your letter dated Nov. 2, I beg to inform you that I understood that the Congress leaders and myself were to consider the proposals of your Excellency. To quote from your Excellency's letter, 'the proposition which I invited you and the other gentlemen present to consider as leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League was that, given great importance of ensuring harmonious working at the centre, you should enter upon discussions between yourselves in the provincial field, consequent on which you could let me have proposals which would result in representatives of your two organisations immediately participating in the Central Executive Council. I brought out, too, that in my judgment it ought not to be necessary absolutely to resolve every detail of such differences as may exist in the provinces. What was required, as was remarked in the course of the discussion, was a degree of agreement in respect of the provinces, such as would make it

possible for my visitors and the organisations which they represented to put forward a scheme which could be considered for the centre.'

I understand that we were to consider your proposals without prejudice to the resolution of the Muslim League of October 22, stating that the declaration of your Excellency on behalf of His Majesty's Government, was not satisfactory and required further clarification and assurances, and also without prejudice to the demand of the Congress for a declaration as adumbrated in the resolution of the A.I.C.C. on October 10, 1939.

In consequence, I met the leaders of the Congress. I was informed by them finally that they had come to the conclusion that they could not discuss any question with regard to matters referred to in your letter of Nov. 2, relating to the provincial field or to the centre, until the British Government had complied with their demand as embodied in the resolution of the A.I.C.C. Hence, these two questions were not further discussed.

## VICEROY'S DECLARATION

(Nov. 5, 1939.)

The Viceroy broadcast the following statement before releasing the foregoing Correspondence:—

It is with profound regret that I have to announce that the conversations which, at my instance, had been inaugurated between the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League have so far not achieved what I had hoped. The country is entitled to know, in a matter of such moment and at a time of such gravity, what was the nature of the proposition which I invited my friends in those two organisations to consider. I shall tomorrow publish correspondence which will make the position perfectly clear. Let me only say that my object has been, in these discussions, to bring together the leaders of the great parties and to endeavour to secure, as a result of personal contact between them, and with what personal assistance I could myself give, that measure of agreement in the provinces which, in their view, would enable them to put forward proposals for a constructive advance at the centre

for the period of the war, such as would be represented by some expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council and by the inclusion in it of political leaders.

My declaration of Oct. 18 contemplated a consultative group. It offered an arrangement relatively so limited as that group only because of marked divergences of view between the great communities, divergences the existence of which held out no hope of harmonious working at the centre on the basis of joint membership of my Executive Council at a time when harmonious working was of first importance. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that that group holds out great possibilities for the future—possibilities, I feel sure, greater than are commonly realized.

I need not say that it is a profound disappointment to me, after such endeavour on the part of His Majesty's Government on the part of those leaders with whom I have conferred and of their friends, as well as on my own part, that we have no more to show and that in so many provinces we should be left with no choice but to use the emergency provisions inserted for that purpose in the Government of India Act. As for those provisions, let me emphasize that they are an expedient and not a sanction. My own strong feeling in regard to their use I cannot better convey than by a paraphrase of the quotation that appears in Arable characters upon the great gateway at Fatehpur, Sikri. That quotation says, 'Life is a bridge—a bridge that you shall pass over. You shall not build your house upon it.'

Nor, in the wider field, do I propose to take this disappointment as final, or to abandon the efforts I am making to bring about a friendly adjustment of the differences in this country to the end that we can continue to co-operate over the achievement of our common objectives. Differences and difficulties such as those which now threaten to retard—even reverse—the course of constitutional development in India and the earliest attainment of the common goal will not disappear spontaneously, nor will they be conjured away by any refusal to recognize their existence. They will be resolved only by negotiations,



carried out in a spirit of mutual accommodation and trust and with a firm resolve to succeed.

I will say no more than that to-night. But I would ask for patience and for the goodwill of the Indian people and of the great political organisations—their members and their leaders—in the efforts I propose to continue to make.

The difficulties are great. How great they are has been most clearly revealed by the events of the last six weeks. But the attempt to reconcile them is one which it is imperative to make and in which, whether I fail or I succeed, I shall spare no effort to bring about the result which is, I know, at the heart of all of those who care for India and for her future.

### VICEROY'S STATEMENT

*Nov. 5, 1939*

His Excellency the Viceroy issued the following statement releasing his correspondence with the Indian Leaders.

War was declared on the 3rd September. In a broadcast that night I appealed to all parties and all sections in India to co-operate in its prosecution. On the following day I saw Mr. Gandhi in Simla, and discussed the whole position freely with him. I similarly took immediate steps to see Mr. Jinnah as representing the Muslim League. Nor did I fail to see the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.

Thereafter the general question came for consideration before the Congress Working Committee and the Working Committee of the Muslim League. The Working Committee of the Congress met on the 15th of September. They condemned Nazi aggression in decisive terms. But they postponed a final decision so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future, and they involved the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what were their war aims and how those aims would apply to India, and be given effect to in the present. Mr. Gandhi's expressing his full agree-

ment with the Working Committee's statement, remarked that he had been sorry to find himself alone in seeking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally.

The Working Committee of the Muslim League on the 18th September similarly asked, "if full, effective, and honourable co-operation of the Mussalmans is desired," that "a sense of security and satisfaction" should be created amongst Muslims, and referred in particular to the position of the Muslims in Congress provinces, and to the necessity for consulting the Muslims fully regarding any change in the existing constitution and securing their consent and approval.

I now again got in touch with Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. I decided that, given the great divergence of view which clearly existed between the two major political parties in India, I must satisfy myself as to the trend of feeling in the country. In pursuance of that object I interviewed over 50 people, representing all parties, communities, and interests. While those conversations were proceeding, the All-India Congress Committee, on the 10th of October, passed a resolution repeating the demand of the Working Committee for a statement by His Majesty's Government of their war aims and peace aims. They demanded also that India should be declared an independent nation and that present application of this status should be given to the largest possible extent.

I reported my conversations in detail to His Majesty's Government who at a time of overwhelming pressure have been devoting the closest attention to the problems of India. It was in the light of profound consideration and long discussion that on the 18th October I made a declaration on behalf of His Majesty's Government. The declaration emphasized first that Dominion Status remained the goal for India; second, that His Majesty's Government were prepared to reconsider the scheme of the present Act at the end of the war in consultation with leaders of opinion in India; third, that His Majesty's Government attached importance to associating public opinion in India with the prosecution of the war, and that for that pur-

pose they contemplated the formation of a Consultative Group the details of which were to be settled after I had further consulted with party leaders.

The announcements in my statement are of great importance. Their importance has been belittled, but they represent points of real substance. The debates in Parliament which followed the publication of my statement brought out another important point—the readiness of His Majesty's Government, if certain conditions were secured, to associate Indian opinion in a still closer and more responsible manner with the conduct of the war by a temporary expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council. But the reception in British India both of my declaration and of the subsequent debate in Parliament was, so far as the Congress was concerned, definitely hostile. The Congress Working Committee on the 22nd of October passed a resolution to the effect that my declaration was entirely unsatisfactory, and called upon the Congress Ministries in the Provinces to resign. The Muslim League on the same day asked that certain doubts should be removed, and complete clarification of the declarations secured, subject to which they, empowered their president, if fully satisfied, "to give an assurance of co-operation and support on behalf of the Mussalmans of India to the British Government for the purpose of prosecution of the war."

I next invited Mr. Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and Mr. Jinnah to come to see me on November 1, and we discussed the whole position with them frankly. I had already in my previous conversations discussed with them, as with almost all my visitors, from various aspects the possibility of an expansion of the Governor-General's Council. I now told them that if in regard to association at the centre, we had been unable to go further than the Consultative Group it was because of the lack of prior agreement between the major communities such as would contribute to harmonious working in the centre. I added that the manifestoes issued on 22nd October by the Congress Working Committee and the Muslim League had shown only too clearly the gulf that existed between the attitude of these two great parties.

I begged my visitors in these circumstances to meet and to have discussions among themselves on the Provincial position, with a view thereafter to putting forward in agreement proposals which could be considered for some expansion of the Governor-General's Council at the Centre. I told them that I saw no necessity for every detail of the differences between them in the Provinces to be resolved. What was needed was a sufficient resolution of those differences to make the devising of scheme for harmonious co-operation at the Centre practicable. I begged them in the most earnest manner to spare no endeavour to reach agreement, and I emphasised that this was essentially a question affecting Indians on which agreement between Indians themselves was what I was anxious to secure. I repeated the profound anxiety not only of myself but of His Majesty's Government to leave nothing undone which would contribute to achieve that agreement.

The discussions which I suggested have taken place. But the result to me has been a profound disappointment. There remains today entire disagreement between the representatives of the major parties on fundamental issues. All I will say now is that I am not prepared to accept this failure. I propose in due course to try again, in consultation with the leaders of these great parties and the Princes, to see if even now there may still be the possibility of securing unity. During all the time I have been in India there is nothing I have been more anxious to secure than unity, and unity. During all the time I have been in India there is nothing I have been more anxious to secure than unity, and unity matters far more to India than is perhaps always realised. Unity, too, means that Indians, whatever their community or whatever their party allegiance, and whether they dwell in British India or in the Indian States, must work together in a common scheme. It is worth a great deal to try to bring that about. I may have been unsuccessful so far but I will try again. And when I try again I would ask India to remember my difficulties, and give me credit for an earnest goodwill and an earnest desire to assist. We are dealing with a problem that has defeated the united endeavours of the greatest organisations in this country. There are grave differences of view which have to be

taken into account, which should be bridged. There are strong and deeply-rooted interests which are entitled to the fullest consideration and whose attitude is not a thing lightly to be brushed aside. There are minorities which are great in numbers as well as great in historic importance, and in culture. Those are all factors to which full weight has to be given. But complex as the problems are, I refuse to regard them as insoluble, and I prefer to believe that, like other human problems, they will yield to patient discussion in a spirit of goodwill. In this belief I am encouraged by the friendly feeling which has pervaded my discussions with the leaders of parties. I would ask the country, and I would ask the leaders of the great political parties and their constituents, who I know have faith in those leaders, and are ably led by them, to give me the help which I so much need if there is to be any hope of overcoming our difficulties and reaching the result which I am sure that we all of us desire.

## COMMENTS ON THE VICEREGAL STATEMENT ON DELHI TALKS

By Mahatma 'Gandhi

I have read with respectful attention His Excellency the Viceroy's broadcast and his introductory remarks on the correspondence between himself and Shri Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah Sahib released by His Excellency. I welcome His Excellency's refusal to accept defeat and his determination to solve what seems to have become insoluble. I share to the fullest extent His Excellency's anxiety to reach a solution. Without, therefore, waiting for the Congress reaction to these two declarations and purely for the sake of assisting the common cause, I would like to suggest that no solution is possible unless an acceptable declaration of war aims about India is forthcoming. The pronouncements hitherto made, whether here or in Great Britain, are after the old style, suspected and discredited by freedom-loving India. If Imperialism is dead, there must be a clear break with the past. Language suited to the new era has to be used. If the time has not yet come for the acceptance of this fundamental truth, I would urge that further effort at reaching a solution should be suspended. In this connection I would remind British statesmen that what is wanted is a declaration of Britain's

intention regarding her Indian policy irrespective of India's wishes. A slave-holder, who has decided to abolish slavery, does not consult his slaves whether they desire freedom or not.

Once a declaration to free India from bondage, not in stages but at once, is made, an interim solution will be found to be easy. Protection of rights of minorities will then become simple. The game of seesaw will cease. The minorities are entitled to protection, not in stages but to the fullest extent and in one single step. No charter of freedom will be worth looking at which does not ensure the same measure of freedom for the minorities as for the majority. The minorities will be full-fledged partners in the framing of the constitution. How that can be attained will depend upon the wisdom of the representatives charged with the sacred duty of preparing the constitution. Britain has hitherto held power—this is inevitable in any system of imperialism—by playing the minorities against the so-called majority and has thus made an agreed solution among the component parts well-nigh impossible. The burden of finding a formula for the protection of minorities should be thrown on the parties themselves. So long as Britain considers it her mission to bear this burden, so long will she continue to feel the necessity of holding India as a dependency. And patriots impatient for deliverance will fight, non-violently if I can guide them and violently if I fail and perish in the attempt. God's curse of war, I had hoped and still hope, would be turned into a blessing by Britain realising that the one thing needful for her to justify and hasten the end of this war was to free a great and ancient country like India from her yoke.

Believing as I do in the Viceroy's sincerity I would urge fellow-workers not too lose patience. There can be no civil resistance so long as, first, the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, secondly, the Muslim League blocks the way, and, thirdly, there is indiscipline and disunity in Congress ranks.

against the League. No Congressman can be party to it. I observed that my note in "Harijan" has shocked Jinnah Saheb. I am sorry for it. But at this stage I would not defend myself. I do not want to mar in any way the negotiations between him and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which I hope will be resumed soon and pray will lead to communal peace.

Since making the above statement I have read the report of the further statement of the Secretary of State in the House of Lords yesterday. It leaves the main position unchanged.

By 'Congress President

I have read the Viceroy's statement published along with the correspondence that passed between him and Mr. Jinnah and myself. He seems to give an impression that the British Government are unable to comply with our request for a clear declaration of India's status as a free country on account of our differences. The fact is that the British Government is not prepared to promise that it will accept and give legal effect to any constitution which the Indians, including all real minorities would prepare and in which the safeguards for the protection of minorities will be included. We made a public demand for such a promise and I cannot understand what objections the British Government can have to this on the score of our differences with the minorities. If we are unable to produce a constitution satisfactory to all, the British Government will be free from all blame and the responsibility will be entirely of the Indians. The minorities which are really for attaining the freedom of India can have no reasonable objection as the proposed constitution will not be produced without co-operation of all.

The real difficulty is not communal, but political. The British Government are not yet prepared to concede the right of self-determination in India in practice however much it may proclaim it in theory to the world. We put its professions to acid test. Let us have a right to frame our own constitution and we shall do it. We failed in the past in assisting the British Government to frame a constitution for us. But helping the British Government to frame a constitution for India is something very different

intention regarding her Indian policy irrespective of India's wishes. A slave-holder, who has decided to abolish slavery, does not consult his slaves whether they desire freedom or not.

Once a declaration to free India from bondage, not in stages but at once, is made, an interim solution will be found to be easy. Protection of rights of minorities will then become simple. The game of seesaw will cease. The minorities are entitled to protection, not in stages but to the fullest extent and in one single step. No charter of freedom will be worth looking at which does not ensure the same measure of freedom for the minorities as for the majority. The minorities will be full-fledged partners in the framing of the constitution. How that can be attained will depend upon the wisdom of the representatives charged with the sacred duty of preparing the constitution. Britain has hitherto held power—this is inevitable in any system of imperialism—by playing the minorities against the so-called majority and has thus made an agreed solution among the component parts well-nigh impossible. The burden of finding a formula for the protection of minorities should be thrown on the parties themselves. So long as Britain considers it her mission to bear this burden, so long will she continue to feel the necessity of holding India as a dependency. And patriots impatient for deliverance will fight, non-violently if I can guide them and violently if I fail and perish in the attempt. God's curse of war, I had hoped and still hope, would be turned into a blessing by Britain realising that the one thing needful for her to justify and hasten the end of this war was to free a great and ancient country like India from her yoke.

Believing as I do in the Viceroy's sincerity I would urge fellow-workers not too lose patience. There can be no civil resistance so long as, first, the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, secondly, the Muslim League blocks the way, and, thirdly, there is indiscipline and disunity in Congress ranks.

The second condition should not offend Muslim friends. So long as there is no workable arrangement with the Muslim League civil resistance must involve resistance



against the League. No Congressman can be party to it. I observed that my note in "Harijan" has shocked Jinnah Sabeb. I am sorry for it. But at this stage I would not defend myself. I do not want to mar in any way the negotiations between him and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which I hope will be resumed soon and pray will lead to communal peace.

Since making the above statement I have read the report of the further statement of the Secretary of State in the House of Lords yesterday. It leaves the main position unchanged.

By<sup>4</sup> Congress President

I have read the Viceroy's statement published along with the correspondence that passed between him and Mr. Jinnah and myself. He seems to give an impression that the British Government are unable to comply with our request for a clear declaration of India's status as a free country on account of our differences. The fact is that the British Government is not prepared to promise that it will accept and give legal effect to any constitution which the Indians, including all real minorities would prepare and in which the safeguards for the protection of minorities will be included. We made a public demand for such a promise and I cannot understand what objections the British Government can have to this on the score of our differences with the minorities. If we are unable to produce a constitution satisfactory to all, the British Government will be free from all blame and the responsibility will be entirely of the Indians. The minorities which are really for attaining the freedom of India can have no reasonable objection as the proposed constitution will not be produced without co-operation of all.

The real difficulty is not communal, but political. The British Government are not yet prepared to concede the right of self-determination to India in practice however much it may proclaim it in theory to the world. We put its professions to acid test. Let us have a right to frame our own constitution and we shall do it. We failed in the past in assisting the British Government to frame a constitution for us. But helping the British Government to frame a constitution for India is something very different

from independently framing a constitution for ourselves with certainty that the constitution will be accepted and enforced.

Our regret is that instead of adopting this straight course and throwing the responsibility upon the Indians to frame a constitution with necessary and satisfactory safeguards for the protection of the minorities and thus showing its own bona fides beyond doubt and cavil the British Government befogged the main and moral issue by asking us to settle our differences without telling us at the same time that the result of such a settlement will be a free constitution for the country. It was for this reason that we felt compelled to concentrate on political issues and to refuse to consider the proposal for the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council before the question of India's status as a free country with full right to self-determination is settled to our satisfaction.

The two principles of organisation of which the Viceroy made reference in his statement, the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League both declared that they aim at the independence for India and so far as I know there is no party or group in India which does not want full powers for India to manage her own affairs by whatever name or expression that freedom may be called or described. There is this fundamental unity in all parties in India and this is a universal urge of all Indians which the Congress embodied in its demand for a clear declaration.

The resolution of the Muslim League is equally clear that it does not accept the Viceroy's announcement and insists upon the clarification of the same and consideration de novo of the question of Indian constitution. How then does any communal difference stand in the way of clear recognition and declaration of the status as a free country? Whatever differences there are relate not to India's status but to certain other subsidiary matters which we are prepared to settle ourselves. Our proposed talks with Mr. Jinnah will relate not to this fundamental position, but other subsidiary matters. The Congress has been insisting on, "constructive programme an essential element of which" as Mr. Jinnah recognises "is communal

unity." We propose to do our best to achieve the success of this essential programme, but the fact that we are still engaged in this most urgent work should not stand in the way of a clear declaration of the kind demanded by us. All points of principle and detail for safeguarding the rights of the minorities have to be left out to be settled by Indians themselves, which they will do to the satisfaction of all if once the British Government proves its own bonafides by ceasing to meddle in our domestic affairs.

By Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

The Viceroy's statement issued last night has surprised me as it conveys an entirely different impression of what transpired in Delhi from what I had gathered from contact with some of the principal parties concerned. From his statement it would appear that the question to be considered was a communal one and he adds that "there remains today entire disagreement between representatives of the major political parties on fundamental issues."

This seems to me an entire misapprehension of the situation and I am not aware of any such disagreement on fundamental issues. But there is a fundamental disagreement between the Congress and the British Government and it was because of this that the Viceroy's proposals could not be considered by us. The question before us was a political one and as such it was considered by all of us.

It was agreed between Mr. Jinnah and me that the communal question should be discussed fully by us at an early convenient date. This did not affect the Viceroy's proposals so long as the political difficulty was not got over.

Hence it was not discussed in this connection. \*

The crisis has arisen over a political issue, namely the European war and the declaration of India as a belligerent country. The Congress Working Committee asked for a statement of war aims and how these were going to be applied to India. - Subsequently a declaration was made by the British Government, through the Viceroy, and this was considered entirely unsatisfactory. As a result of this Congress felt that it could not associate itself with the war and called upon Congress Governments to resign.

— These resignations were offered and in some cases have already been accepted. All this had nothing to do with the communal situation.

The Viceroy then suggests that the Congress and the Muslim League should come to an agreement in regard to the provincial field, consequent on which proposals for the centre would be considered. This suggestion, however desirable at any other time, had no application to the present situation as we had voluntarily retired from the provincial field because of disagreement with the British Government on vital matters of policy. Our withdrawal from the provincial Governments was in no way due to communal conflict.

It was surprising therefore that the Viceroy should forget or ignore the basic issue and take our co-operation with Britain for granted subject to minor changes. As Shri Rajendra Prasad has stated in his letter "both Mahama Gandhi and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of war aims without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal."

It must be remembered that this clarification does not affect the communal problem, and the proposal for a Constituent Assembly, as amplified by Shri Rajendra Prasad, in his interview with and letter to the Viceroy, also overcomes any communal objection.

Does the Viceroy imagine that Mr. Jinnah or the Muslim League are opposed to such clarification or the declaration of India as a free country? If so, I fear he is very much mistaken. I found, to my pleasure, that in regard to objectives Mr. Jinnah and I had a great deal in common. He did not entirely agree with our approach to the political problem and so we decided to send separate answers to the Viceroy. Our talks removed many misapprehensions and brought us much nearer to each other than we had been for some years past. I am convinced that such difference as exists politically or communally, can be and will be got over. Even during the last week it was not any differences between Mr. Jinnah

and us that came in the way, but the fundamental difference between the British Government and us.

Let there be no mistake about this. No one stands in the way of an unequivocal declaration of war aims and India's freedom by the British Government except themselves. Till such a satisfactory declaration is made, other issues do not arise, and we cannot associate ourselves in any way with British policy. To drag the communal question in this straight issue is to befog people's minds and divert them into wrong channels.

## THE ONLY WAY

By Mahatma Gandhi

*Allahabad, 19-4-1939.*

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study, among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from scepticism. Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself. For I seem to see in it a remedy, which Jawaharlal may not, for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education.

The more criticism I see of the scheme, the more enamoured I become of it. It will be the surest index to the popular feeling. It will bring out the best and the worst in us. Illiteracy does not worry me. I would plump for unadulterated adult franchise for both men and women, i.e., I would put them all on the register of voters. It is open to them not to exercise it if they do not wish to. I would give separate vote to the Muslims; but without giving separate vote, I would, though reluctantly, give reservation, if required, to every real minority according to its numerical strength.

Thus the Constituent Assembly provides the easiest method of arriving at a just solution of the communal problem. Today we are unable to say with mathematical

precision who represents whom. Though the Congress is admittedly the oldest representative organisation on the widest scale, it is open to political and semi-political organisations to question, as they do question, its overwhelmingly representative character. The Muslim League is undoubtedly the largest organisation representing Muslims, but several Muslim bodies—by no means all insignificant—deny its claim to represent them. But the Constituent Assembly will represent all communities in their exact proportion. Except it there is no other way of doing full justice to rival claims. Without it there can be no finality to communal and other claims.

Again the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people. Undoubtedly such a constitution will not be ideal, but it will be real, however imperfect it may be in the estimation of the theorists or legal luminaries. Self-Government to be self-government has merely to reflect the will of the people who are to govern themselves. If they are not prepared for it, they will make a hash of it. I can conceive the possibility of a people fitting themselves for right government through a series of wrong experiments, but I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion. A diseased person has a prospect of getting well by personal effort. He cannot borrow health from others.

The risks of the experiment are admitted. There is likely to be impersonation. Unscrupulous persons will mislead the illiterate masses into voting for wrong men and women. These risks have to be run, if we are to evolve something true and big. The Constituent Assembly, if it comes into being—as I hope it will—as a result of an honourable settlement between us and the British people, the combined wit of the best men of the two nations will produce an Assembly that will reflect fairly and truly the

the intention of the British statesmen to part with power without engaging India in a deadly unorganised rebellion. For I know that India has become impatient. I am painfully conscious of the fact that India is not yet ready for non-violent civil disobedience on a mass scale. If, therefore, I cannot persuade the Congress to await the time when non-violent action is possible, I have no desire to live to see a dog-fight between the two communities. I know for certain that, if I cannot discover a method of non-violent action or inaction to the satisfaction of the Congress and there is no communal adjustment, nothing on earth can prevent an outbreak of violence resulting for the time being in anarchy and red ruin. I hold that it is the duty of all communities and Englishmen to prevent such a catastrophe.

The only way out is a Constituent Assembly. I have given my own opinion on it, but I am not tied down to the details. When I was nearly through with this article, I got the following wire from Syed Abdulla Brelvi: "Considerable misapprehensions among minorities (about) Constituent Assembly. Strongly urge clarification details, franchise, composition, methods arriving decision." I think I have said sufficient in the foregoing to answer Syed Saheb's question. By minorities he has Muslims principally in mind as represented by the Muslim League. If once the proposition that all countries desire a charter of independence framed by a Constituent Assembly, and that they will not be satisfied with anything else, is accepted, the settling of details surely becomes easy. Any other method must lead to an imposed constitution mostly undemocratic. It would mean an indefinite prolongation of imperialistic rule sustained by the help of those who will not accept the fully democratic method of a Constituent Assembly.

The principal hindrance is undoubtedly the British Government. If they can summon a Round Table Conference as they propose to do after the War, they can surely summon a Constituent Assembly subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities. The expression 'satisfaction of minorities' may be regarded as vague. It

can be defined beforehand by agreement. The question thus resolves itself into whether the British Government desire to part with power and open a new chapter in their own history. I have already shown that the question of the Princes is a red herring across the path. European interests are absolutely safe so long as they are not in conflict with the 'interests of India.' I think this expression finds place in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact.

Look at the question from any standpoint you like, it will be found that the way to democratic Swaraj lies only through a properly constituted Assembly call it by whatever name you like. All resources must, therefore, be exhausted to reach the Constituent Assembly before direct action is thought of. A stage may be reached when direct action may become the necessary prelude to the Constituent Assembly. That stage is not yet.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Allahabad, Nov. 19—23, 1939*

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The Committee discussed the political situation in India created by the war and the resignation of Congress Ministries and passed the following resolution :—

The Working Committee have noted with pleasure the response of the country to the policy enunciated by them in regard to the war crisis in Europe and its repercussions in India. This policy, based on numerous declarations of the Congress, was laid down in the statement issued by the Committee on September 14, 1939, and subsequent events have amply justified its wisdom and expedience. The course of the war and the policy pursued by the British and French Governments, and, in particular, the declarations made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India, seem to demonstrate that the present war, like the world war of 1914-18, is being carried on for imperialist ends, and British imperialism is to remain entrenched in India. With such a war and with this policy the Congress cannot associate itself, and it cannot countenance the exploitation of India's resources to this end.



The Working Committee's unequivocal demand was for a declaration of war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and in particular how these aims were going to be applied to India. These aims could only be considered worthy if they included the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as an independent nation whose policy would be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people. The answer to this demand has been entirely unsatisfactory and an attempt has been made on behalf of the British Government to create misunderstandings and to be-fog the main and moral issue. In justification of this refusal to make a declaration in terms of the Working Committee's resolution, communal pleas have been advanced and the rights of minorities and of the Princes pleaded as a barrier to India's freedom. The committee wish to declare with all emphasis that no communal considerations arise in meeting the demand of the Congress, and the minorities, whatever their other differences might be, do not oppose India's right to freedom and independence. The Princes are represented by, and are the emblems of, the Paramount Power in India. In the end it will be the people of the Indian States who will determine what part they will take in a free India, though the British Government has consistently ignored their wishes in a matter which vitally affects them. In any event the wishes of those who may oppose India's independence are, and must be, irrelevant to the declaration of the British Government's intentions. The Committee can only interpret this attempt to avoid a statement of war aims and Indian freedom, by taking shelter under irrelevant issues, as a desire to maintain imperialist domination in India in alliance with the reactionary elements in the country.

The Congress has looked upon the war crisis and the problems it raises as essentially a moral issue, and has not sought to profit by it in any spirit of bargaining. The moral and dominant issue of war aims and India's freedom has to be settled unsatisfactorily before any other subsidiary question can be considered. In no event can the Congress accept the responsibility of government, even

in the transitional period, without real power being given to popular representatives. The Working Committee therefore approve of and endorse the reply dated November 4, 1939 sent by the Congress President to the Viceroy.

The Committee wish to declare again that the recognition of India's independence and of the right of her people to frame their constitution through a Constituent Assembly, is essential in order to remove the taint of imperialism from Britain's policy and to enable the Congress to consider further co-operation. They hold that a Constituent Assembly is the only democratic method of determining the constitution of a free country, and no one who believes in democracy and freedom can possibly take exception to it. The Working Committee believe too that the Constituent Assembly alone is the adequate instrument for solving the communal and other difficulties. This however does not mean that the Working Committee will relax their efforts for arriving at a solution of the communal problem. The Assembly can frame a constitution in which the rights of accepted minorities would be protected to their satisfaction, and, in the event of some matters relating to minority rights not being mutually agreed to, they can be referred to arbitration. The Constituent Assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage, existing separate electorates being retained for such minorities as desire them. The number of members in the Assembly should reflect their numerical strength.

The declarations made on behalf of the British Government being inadequate have compelled the Congress to dissociate itself from British policy and war effort, and as a first step in non-co-operation, to bring about the resignation of all Congress Governments in the Provinces. That policy of non-co-operation continues and must continue unless the British Government revises its policy and accepts the Congress contention. The Working Committee would, however, remind Congressmen that it is inherent in every form of Satyagraha that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with the opponent. While a Satyagrahi is ever ready for a non-violent fight,

if it has to come, he never relaxes his effort for peace and always works for its attainment. The Working Committee will, therefore, continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government has banged the door in the face of the Congress. The Committee must however resist, by the non-violent methods of the Congress, all attempts to coerce the people of India along paths which are not of their choice and everything that is against the dignity and freedom of India.

The Working Committee appreciate and express pleasure at the readiness exhibited by Congressmen for the launching of Civil Disobedience, should this become necessary. But Civil Disobedience requires the same strict discipline as an army organised for armed conflict. The army is helpless unless it possesses its weapons of destruction and knows how to use them. So also an army of non-violent soldiers is ineffective unless it understands and possesses the essentials of non-violence. The Working Committee desire to make it clear that the true test of preparedness for Civil Disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves spinning and promoting the cause of khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth, and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community, and individual Hindu Congressmen seeking occasion for fraternising with the Harijans as often as possible.

Congress organisations and Congressmen should therefore prepare for future action by promoting this programme. They should explain to the people the message and policy of the Congress and the implications of the Constituent Assembly, which is the crux of the Congress programme for the future.

#### LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN HOUSE OF LORDS

*Dec 14, 1939*

Making a statement in the House of Lords Lord Zetland said

In spite of the efforts of German propaganda carried on by broadcasting and such other means, as are open to

them, the Princes and the people of India continue to express in no uncertain terms their detestation of the crimes of Nazi Germany against all laws of God and man. The Viceroy's war purposes fund for which no appeal has so far been made either by the Viceroy or by the Governors and which consists therefore of voluntary contributions spontaneously made, amounts now to a sum of £750,000. Among the contributions earmarked by their donors for special purposes Your Lordships may be interested to know of the gift of £7,500 by the Maharaja of Gondal for the dependents of those who were lost in the "Royal Oak". You will have heard already of the munificent gift of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad of £100,000 to the Air Ministry to provide a Hyderabad squadron for aerial warfare. Another special donation is a lakh of rupees by His Highness the Nawab of Rampur for motor ambulances, one only of the number of similar gifts. These are but examples which it would be easy to multiply.

Lord Zetland added "for the benefit of German propagandists who spend much time in explaining to the world the miserable plight of the Indian people under the rapacious tyranny of Great Britain I feel moved to add a single example of the feelings of Indian peasantry themselves in the matter. In one district of the Punjab, with a few people of wealth among its residents, the Governor was recently handed a wholly unsolicited gift of rupees seventeen thousand, all in currency notes, to aid in overthrowing Nazi Germany. Such things speak for themselves. I make a free gift of this item of information to the German gentleman known as Lord Haw Haw for inclusion in his next broadcast. A number of Princes have not been content to limit their financial assistance to lump sums of money, but are contributing percentages of their incomes for the period of war. Some of them, with great fighting traditions behind them have placed their forces at the disposal of His Majesty and have shown keen anxiety themselves to play a part in the actual field of battle; a gesture, which is greatly appreciated by His Majesty's Government, even if it is not possible in the present circumstances to take advantage of their desires in this regard. Offers of additional battalions of troops

over and above the State earmarked units have been made by Their Highnesses of Kashmir and Bikaner. Similarly among martial races, particularly in the Punjab, there has been a spontaneous and eager desire to enlist in the armed forces of the Crown.

In the political field I regret to say that difficulties with which your lordships are familiar persist. In the Punjab and in the Bengal and in the Sind the Governments and legislatures are functioning normally and with success. In Assam, where the Ministry under a Congress Prime Minister resigned an alternative Government under Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla, a former Prime Minister has accepted office; but in the remaining seven provinces in which the Congress Ministries were in office, the administration has been taken over by the Governors with the result that wholly contrary to our desires the hands of the clock have been put back thirty years to before the days of the Minto-Morley constitution. I should add for the information of your lordships that the transition has been effected smoothly; that there has been no reversal of policy in any important respect and that broadly speaking, the measures promoted by the Ministries and assented to by the Legislatures before they resigned, are being given effect to by the Governors.

Since I last addressed your lordship on the matter there has been a further meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress and a further statement of their position. There is a sentence contained in it, which I warmly welcome; it runs as follows—"it is inherent in every form of Satyagraha"—that is to say passive resistance—"that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with an opponent." That I need hardly say is what we ourselves most earnestly desire.

What then, you may ask, stands in the way? Not the least of the obstacles is difference of opinion between the Congress and the Moslem League as to the relations of the Congress and what for want of better term are described compendiously as minorities. The nature of this difference is well illustrated by another sentence in the most recent statement by the Congress Working Committee, which runs as follows—"The Committee wish to declare

that no communal considerations arise in meeting the demands of the Congress.' I am sure they are sincere in holding that belief; nevertheless, it is one which His Majesty's Government are unable to share. In their view no constitution could be expected to function successfully, which did not meet with the general assent of the minorities, who had to live under it. I am not, of course, in any way, intending to minimise the importance of such sections of the population as the scheduled castes, or indeed, of any other minority, when I say that by far the most important of the so-called minority communities are the Moslems. I am well aware that I need hardly say that there are Moslems to be found in the ranks of the Congress yet the fact remains that of the four hundred eighty two Moslems elected to the lower Chambers of the Provincial Legislatures at the last general election only 26 stood as Congressmen and Mr. Gandhi himself has stated that the All-India Moslem League is undoubtedly the largest organisation representing Moslems, though he also speaks of Moslem bodies, which deny its claim to represent them.

There is a further consideration to be borne in mind. We speak of Moslems as a minority, because on a purely arithmetical basis they are less in number than the Hindus. But they are a community of from eighty to ninety millions with race memories of days, when for 200 years the Moghul dynasty ruled over a greater part of the Indian sub-continent. They have behind them a tradition of military service, which persists to this day and is exemplified by the high proportion of the Indian army, which they fill. I have recalled these facts because they make it clear that minorities of Europe present us with no full analogy and God knows, minorities of Europe have been a source of sufficient trouble in the world of today.

I observe that Mr. Gandhi himself in his paper "Harijan" of November 25 speaks of summoning a Constituent Assembly 'subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities'; and he goes on to say—'the expression, satisfaction of minorities, may be regarded as vague. It can be defined beforehand by agreement.' We too regard it as essential for constitutional advance by whatever means, advance is to be obtained—that assent of minorities should be secured as far as is possible by agreement.

But it is not within our power to impose an agreement upon them; that can only be reached by Indians themselves

It was with a view to promoting discussion to that end between the leaders of the Congress and of the All-India Moslem League that they were invited by the Viceroy, not long since to meet one another.

I would appeal to the leaders of the Congress as the largest and most powerful political organisation in India to endeavour to understand the difficulties which are responsible for the attitude of the All-India Moslem League. How great is the need for such an understanding is shown by the instruction issued a few days ago by the President of the All-India Moslem League to the Moslems throughout India to observe 22nd of this month as 'Day of Deliverance and Thanksgiving that the Congress Governments ceased to function.' I would equally appeal to the President of the All-India Moslem League to consider the effect of such action upon the relations between the two communities generally and also between the Congress and the All-India Moslem League. Will they not call a truce in order that there may be free and friendly discussion between them with a view to reaching that agreement, of which Mr. Gandhi has written? I derive some little encouragement from the report, which has reached me that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Jinnah have arranged to meet one another for further discussion

That is all to the good and I venture to hope that they may cover a wide field for I am convinced that so long as the legislatures are divided on communal rather than on political lines so long will serious difficulty be experienced in the working of democratic institutions with success. What we have to aim at is a state of affairs under which the legislator will think of himself as an Indian first and as Hindu or Moslem afterwards. When that has been achieved the greatest stumbling block in the way of India's progress will have been removed

There are, of course, other matters which have to be taken into account. There is the defence of India, our obligations to the Princes and the position which our own people have built up in India by the enterprise of generations, to mention only some of them. But the

problem of the moment is that of minorities and it is for this reason that I confine myself to it this afternoon.

Let me, however, conclude as I began with an assurance to your lordships that, while there are these internal difficulties, they do not lessen the abhorrence with which men of all creeds and communities in India view the Nazi system against which we have taken up arms. I have noticed an attempt on the part of the German propaganda department to propagate the idea that Indians should look to Nazi Germany for their freedom. The conception of 'Hitler the liberator' is so grotesque as to bring a smile to the face of anyone except possibly a German and if Hitler and his associates imagine that they may look for aid from India they are heading for one of the greatest disillusionments of their lives.

### **PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON LORD ZETLAND'S POLICY**

Lord Zetland occupies a high office. But many of his recent utterances can hardly be termed responsible or helpful. I have no desire to discuss his latest speech in any detail. He has raised some novel points and arguments and laid stress on the minorities question specially. No one in India can possibly ignore this question and all of us are obviously desirous of solving it to the satisfaction of the various parties concerned.

How is it to be solved within the context of democracy? Obviously, the fundamental principles governing any consideration of any aspect of the Indian problem are democracy and unity of India. The suggestion put forward by the Congress that all these matters should be decided by a Constituent Assembly meets in principle all the difficulties raised. This does not mean that all our problems are simple of solution or that there will not be complications and difficulties to face. But it does offer not only a suitable method but the only way within the context of democracy. The mass of people by adult suffrage elect their representatives; all the principal minorities are represented and have a voice in the shaping of India's future. In regard to their particular problems it may be said that a minority's rights might be over-ridden by majority vote.



That has been got over by the suggestion that such rights should be settled by agreements. If there is no agreement about a specific issue then the only proper course is to refer it to an independent arbitration such as the League of Nations or the International Court at the Hague.

Nothing could be fairer than this and no minority can possibly object to it. It avoids the possibility of the majority forcing its will on a minority in regard to the minorities' special rights and interests. It avoids also the absurdity of a minority imposing its will on a majority. The importance of the Constituent Assembly procedure is to get the real opinion of the masses, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, etc., through their elected representatives. The question does not arise then of who the Congress represents or the Muslim League or any other party. If these organisations command the confidence of the people their nominees will be elected to the Constituent Assembly.

I agree with Lord Zetland that it is a little absurd to consider the Moslems in India as a minority. Not only their great numbers but the fact that in large areas of the country they are in a majority makes it clear that no minority question really arises. Ordinarily speaking, such numbers warrant no protection as they can well look after their own interests. As a matter of fact, in predominantly Moslem areas like the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, the N. W. F. P. and Baluchistan the minorities are non-Muslims and many of them have demanded protection. If India is looked at as a whole these various factors balance one another and prevent misbehaviour of any religious or racial group.

Lord Zetland unfortunately still thinks in terms of a bygone age and has a semi-feudal outlook on life. He does not realise that new forces are convulsing India. Even among the Muslims the mass of the people are claiming their own rights from their upper class and sometimes their semi-feudal leaders. The problems of India are essentially economic though a continuous attempt is made and has again been made by Lord Zetland to make them appear to be racial and minority problems. Lord Zetland possibly still thinks of the Princes of India as the hereditary rulers and of the Rajputs and other classes as the

obvious military class. But things are very different in the India of today and all this attempt to hide the real issues cannot last long in this dynamic situation.

I can well understand the opposition of the British Government to the idea of the Constituent Assembly because such an Assembly necessarily puts an end to British Imperialism. Between the position of Indian nationalism and that of British imperialism there is no common factor. If the British Government is unable to agree to the British Government interfering in any way in such a decision. We agree to differ and the future will decide whose will prevails. But I cannot understand how in reason any individual or group in India, standing for Indian freedom, more specially standing for real democracy in India, can oppose the Constituent Assembly conception. Are they afraid of going to the electorate? The only alternative to this is that they prefer British rule or interference with Indian freedom. There is no other way of having a free constitution to India and every other method involves a measure of dictation from abroad. The alternatives are, as previously stated, continuation of British domination and the development, sporadically or otherwise of Sovietism in India. I do not know how the mass of Indian people will decide in the particular matter but I am prepared to leave it to them and take the risk. The days of small groups at the top deciding the fate of India cannot last.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Wardha, 18th to 22nd Dec. 1939.*

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The Working Committee took stock of the political situation and passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee have studied with regret the recent pronouncements of the Secretary of State for India. His reference to the communal question merely clouds the issue and takes the public mind off the central fact that the British Government have failed to define their war aims especially with regard to India's freedom.

In the opinion of the Working Committee the communal question will never be satisfactorily solved so long as the different parties are to look to a third party, through whose favour they expect to gain special privileges, even though it may be at the expense of the nation. The rule of a foreign power over a people involves a division among the elements composing it. The Congress has never concealed from itself the necessity of uniting the various divisions. It is the one organisation which in order to maintain its national character has consistently tried, not always without success, to bring about unity. But the Working Committee are convinced that lasting unity will only come when foreign rule is completely withdrawn. Events that have happened since the last meeting of the Committee have confirmed this opinion. The Working Committee are aware that the independence of India cannot be maintained, if there are warring elements within the country. The Committee are therefore entitled to read in the British Government's raising the communal question reluctance to part with power. The Constituent Assembly as proposed by the Congress is the only way to attain a final settlement of communal questions. The proposal contemplates fullest representation of all communities with separate electorates where necessary. It has already been made clear on behalf of the Congress that minority rights will be protected to the satisfaction of that minorities concerned, difference, if any, being referred to an impartial tribunal.

Congressmen must have by now realised that independence is not to be won without very hard work. Since the Congress is pledged to non-violence, the final sanction behind it is Civil Resistance, which is but a part of Satyagraha. Satyagraha means good-will towards all, especially towards opponents. Therefore it is the duty of individual Congressmen to promote and seek good-will. Success of the programme of Khaddar as an accepted symbol of non-violence, harmony and economic independence is indispensable. The Working Committee, therefore, hope that all Congress organisations will, by a vigorous prosecution of the constructive programme, prove themselves fit to take up the call when it comes.

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

In view of the present political crisis and the urgent necessity of preparing the country for the struggle that may be forced upon us, in the near future by the attitude of the British Government towards our demands, it was felt that the Independence Pledge for this year should be so framed as to help in the preparation already on foot. The following resolution was therefore passed:

The Working Committee draw the attention of all Congress Committees, Congressmen and the country to the necessity of observing properly and with due solemnity Independence Day on January 26, 1940. Ever since 1930 this day has been regularly observed all over the country and it has become a landmark in our struggle for independence. Owing to the crisis through which India and the world are now passing and the possibility of our struggle for freedom being continued in an intenser form, the next celebration of this Day has a special significance attached to it. This celebration must therefore not only be the declaration of our national will to freedom, but a preparation for that struggle and a pledge to disciplined action.

The Working Committee, therefore, call upon all Congress Committees and individual Congressmen to take the pledge prescribed below in public meetings called for the purpose. Where owing to illness or other physical disability, or to being in an out of way place, individual Congressmen are unable to attend a public meeting, they should take the pledge in their homes, individually or in groups. The Working Committee advise organisations and individuals to notify their Provincial Congress Committees of the meetings held as well as the individual or group pledges taken. The Committee hope that none who does not believe in the contents of the pledge will take it merely for the sake of form. Those Congressmen who do not believe in the prescribed pledge should notify their disapproval, stating reasons therefore to the Provincial Congress Committee, giving their names and addresses. This information is required not for the purpose of any disciplinary action but for the purpose of ascertaining the strength of disapproval of anything contained in the pledge. The Working Committee have no desire to impose the pledge on unwilling Congressmen. In a non-violent organisation

compulsion can have little place. The launching of civil disobedience requires the disciplined fulfilment of the essential conditions thereof.

### PLEDGE

"We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

"We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to Swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods, and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain Independence.

to take the pledge prescribed below in public meetings

"We pledge ourselves anew to the Independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry out non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained.

"We believe that non-violent action in general and preparation for non-violent direct action in particular, require successful working of the constructive programme of Khadi, communal harmony and removal of untouchability. We shall seek every opportunity of spreading goodwill among fellowmen without distinction of caste or creed. We shall endeavour to raise from ignorance and poverty those who have been neglected and to advance in every way the interests of those who are considered to be backward and suppressed. We know that though we are out to destroy the imperialistic system we have no quarrel with Englishmen, whether officials or non-officials. We know that distinction between the caste Hindus and Harijans must be abolished, and Hindus have to forget these distinc-

tions in their daily conduct. Such distinctions are a bar to non-violent conduct. Though our religious faith may be different, in our mutual relations we will act as children of mother India, bound by common nationality and common political and economic interest.

"Charkha and Khadi are an integral part of our constructive programme, for the resuscitation of the seven hundred thousand villages of India and for the removal of the grinding poverty of the masses. We shall, therefore, spin regularly, use for our personal requirements nothing but Khadi, and so far as possible, products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise.

"We pledge ourselves to a disciplined observance of Congress principles and policies and to keep in readiness to respond to the call of the Congress, whenever it may come, for carrying on the struggle for the independence of India."

#### **CENTRAL ASSEMBLY ATTENDANCE**

The Committee decided that the members of the Central Assembly will continue their abstention from the Assembly except in so far as it may be necessary to retain their seats.

#### **VICEROY'S SPEECH AT THE ORIENTAL CLUB, BOMBAY**

*Jan. 10, 1940.*

Following is the text of His Excellency the Viceroy's speech at the luncheon given by the Orient Club, Bombay on Wednesday:—

I thank you most warmly, Mr. Chairman, for your kind words. I should like to say how very grateful I am to you and to the members of the Orient Club for their very kind invitation to me to be present here today. I am delighted to be able to see Bombay again and I shall always remember the warm welcome which you, gentlemen, and Bombay were kind enough to give me when I came here a year ago. After referring to the war, His Excellency said:—

When I had the pleasure of meeting you a year ago, gentlemen, I spoke of the working of Provincial Autonomy, and the success which the scheme of Provincial Autonomy

under the Act of 1935 had achieved in this great presidency. I said, too, that Provincial Autonomy was only one part of the scheme. I emphasized the importance of bringing into effect without any delay the scheme of Federation which was the coping stone of the constitutional structure embodied in the Act. I said that it was all the more important that we should secure Federalism with as little delay as practicable because of the deterioration in the international situation, and I urged that we should press on with it with all the energy in our power, since, whatever its shortcomings, the Federal Scheme was the scheme that held out the best hope of swift constitutional progress and of the unity of India.

We meet, today, in very different circumstances. To my deep regret there has been in this province a temporary interruption in the normal working of the scheme of Provincial Autonomy. We have no longer (of power Ministers backed by a majority in the Legislature; and the administration is perforce being carried on under the emergency provisions of the Act of 1935. No one regrets, I am sure, more than you do yourselves, that this should be the case, or that at a time when the burdens and the responsibilities to be carried on behalf of the public are greater than they have ever been, Ministers should not be in power to assist in carrying those burdens. We can but trust that this interruption will be temporary, and that the re-establishment of the normal working of the Constitution in the provincial sphere will before long be practicable.

But in the provincial field<sup>3</sup> we have at any rate been able to bring into being, and to test by practical application, those portions of the Act of 1935 which devolve great powers and responsibilities on elected Ministers. We had not reached that point in the centre when the war broke out, though our preparations were being pushed on with all possible energy. At the beginning of the war, which we had every reason to believe would develop on lines which would make it immediately necessary to concentrate every atom of our energy on the prosecution of the

war to the exclusion of all other matters, the course of wisdom much as all of us might regret it, was clearly for the time being to suspend the preparations afoot for the establishment of the Federation of India I deeply regret myself that that should have been necessary, since whatever criticism on one ground or another have been levelled against the scheme of Federation in the Act could it but have been brought into operation, it would, as I remarked recently elsewhere, have provided us with the solution of almost all the problems that confront us today—the presence of Ministers at the Centre, the association of the Indian States—a point of such vital importance to British India—in a common Government; the representation of all minorities on the lines elaborated after a full consideration of the claims and proposals of the minorities themselves, and the unity of India.

You know only too well how things have gone since September. I do not propose to dilate on that today. As you know, in response to requests for a clarification of the aims of His Majesty's Government and of their intentions towards India His Majesty's Government have made it clear, both through statements issued by myself, and in Parliament, that their objective for India is Full Dominion Status, Dominion Status too, 'of the Statute of Westminster variety' that so far as the intermediate period is concerned (and it is their desire to make that intermediate period the shortest practicable), they are ready to consider the reopening of the scheme of the Act of 1935 so soon as practicable after the war with the aid of Indian opinion, that they are prepared in the meantime, subject to such local adjustments between the leaders of the great communities as may be necessary to ensure harmonious working and as an immediate earnest of the intention, to expand the Executive Council of the Governor-General by the inclusion of a small number of political leaders, and that they are ready and anxious to give all the help they can to overcome the difficulties that confront us and that confront India today. But those assurances have not to my profound regret, dissipated the doubts and the uncertainties which have led to the withdrawal from office of the Congress Ministries, and which have made it necessary



in seven Provinces to make use of the emergency provisions of the Act.

The pronouncement made on behalf of His Majesty's Government since the beginning of the war make clear, I think, beyond any question whatever, their intentions and their anxiety to help. The Federal Scheme of the Act was itself designed as a stage on the road to Dominion Status, and under that scheme, devised, I would remind you, long before there was any question of a war, very wide and extensive powers were to be placed in the hands of a Central Government, representing the Indian States as well as British India, and constituted on a very broad basis indeed. There can be no question of the good faith and the sincerity of His Majesty's Government in the efforts they have made to deal with the constitutional future of India. I well know that there are many people who press for swifter and more radical solutions of the problems before us. I do not question the sincerity of the good intentions of those who feel that way. But all those of us who have to deal with problems of this magnitude know only too well how often we are attracted by apparently simple solutions; how often those apparently simple solutions, when more closely investigated, reveal unexpected difficulties, and difficulties, too, of unexpected importance, anxious as we may all be able to take what seems to be the shortest course.

Short cuts as many of us know to our cost are too often prone in experience to lead to a considerable waste of time. Nowhere I fear is that truer than of the political problems of India, for there are difficulties, and real difficulties, of which we are all aware, and which we all regret. But they will not be avoided or disposed of by ignoring their existence. The wise course is to face up to those difficulties and to try to find a solution of them that will result in the subsequent co-operation of all the parties and interests concerned. We are, after all, dealing not with one political party only, but with many. Nor must we forget the essential necessity, in the interests of Indian unity, of the inclusion of the Indian States in any constitutional scheme. There are the insistent claims of the minorities. I need refer only to two of them—the great Muslim minority and the scheduled castes there

are the guarantees that have been given to the minorities in the past; the fact that their position must be safeguarded, and that those guarantees must be honoured. I know, gentlemen, that you appreciate the difficulty of the position of His Majesty's Government, faced as they are with strong and conflicting claims advanced by bodies and interests to whose views the utmost attention must be paid, and whose position must receive the fullest consideration. Justice must be done as between the various parties, and His Majesty's Government are determined to see Justice done. But I would ask my friends in the various parties to consider whether they cannot get together and reach some agreement between themselves which would facilitate my task, and the task of His Majesty's Government, in dealing with this vital opinion of Indian constitutional progress: and I would venture again to emphasize the case for compromise, the case for avoiding too rigid an approach to problems such as those with which we are dealing today.

As to the objective there is no dispute. I am ready to consider any practical suggestion that has general support, and I am ready, when the time comes, to give every help that I personally can. His Majesty's Government are not blind nor can we be blind here—to the practical difficulties involved in moving at one step from the existing constitutional position into that constitutional position which is represented by Dominion Status. But here again I can assure you that their concern and mine is to spare no effort to reduce to the minimum the interval between the existing state of things and the achievement of Dominion Status.

The offer is there. The responsibility that falls on the great political parties and their leaders is a heavy one, and one of which they are, I know, fully conscious. They have helped me in the past I ask today that they will help me again and help India, and I ask for their co-operation and their assistance in terminating at as early a date as possible a state of things which all who have faith in the virtue of constitutional progress must deplore; a state of things which every lover of India—everyone who is concerned to advance her interests—must feel today to be a bitter disappointment.

## CONGRESS PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

*Jan 14, 1940*

\*

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian National Congress, has issued the following statement on the Viceroy's speech at the Bombay Orient Club luncheon:—

"I admit that the Viceroy's declaration is the clearest of all the declarations hitherto made. But there are some things, which need to be said on behalf of the Congress. For instance, His Excellency the Viceroy refers to Dominion Status of the Statute of Westminster variety. But it should be clearly understood that the Congress goal is independence pure and simple.

"The second thing that I would like to draw attention to is about the many parties and the Viceroy's appeal to them to arrive at some kind of compromise. I wish to point out that the party leaders are not full representatives of their communities. Thus, though the Congress aspires and claims to represent the whole of India, legally I myself represent no more than the voters on the Congress register. Similarly Mr Jinnah, although he is President of a very important All-India Muslim organisation, cannot legally represent the whole of the Muslims of India. We know that there are rival Muslim organisations."

Dr. Rajendra Prasad adds—"Or take the Scheduled Classes. Dr Ambedkar, an eminent member though he is, in reality represents a fraction of these classes. Therefore, when the Viceroy appeals to the parties, he evidently ignores the inherent and fatal defect I have pointed out. Such parties can never come to a just conclusion in a matter of so tremendous importance as drawing up a charter of Independence of India.

"So long as the British Government's attitude is not changed in this respect, their assurance would seem to lose its force accompanied as it is by a condition, which I have shown to be incapable of fulfilment. It will now be seen that the Congress has not put forth the Constituent Assembly as the only solution without careful consideration. All Congressmen realise that short cuts are no

cuts and so far as the rights of minorities are concerned, it is common cause that they should be clearly defined and scrupulously respected.

## GANDHI-VICEROY INTERVIEW

*New Delhi, Feb. 5, 1940*

In response to an invitation from the Viceroy Mahatma Gandhi had an interview with him on February 5, 1940 on the present political situation in the country. The interview lasted for two hours and a half. The following communiqué which was agreed to between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi was issued:

In response to an invitation from His Excellency Mr. Gandhi to-day came to see the Viceroy. A prolonged and very friendly discussion took place in which the whole position was exhaustively examined. Mr. Gandhi made it clear at the outset of the conversation that he had no mandate from the Congress Working Committee, that he was not empowered to commit in any way, and that he could speak on behalf of himself only.

His Excellency set out in some detail the intentions and the proposals of His Majesty's Government. He emphasised in the first place their earnest desire that India should attain Dominion Status at the earliest possible moment, and to facilitate the achievement of that status by all means in their power. He drew attention to the complexity and difficulty of certain of the issues that called for disposal in that connection, in particular, the issue of defence in a Dominion position. He made it clear that His Majesty's Government were only too ready to examine the whole of the field in consultation with representatives of all parties and interests in India when the time came. He made clear also the anxiety of His Majesty's Government, to shorten the transitional period and to bridge it as effectively as possible.

His Excellency drew attention to the fact that, as he recently repeated at Baroda, the Federal scheme of the Act, while at present in suspense, afforded the swiftest stepping stone to Dominion Status, and that its adoption, with the consent of all concerned, would facilitate the solution of

many of the problems that had to be faced in that connection

He added that the offer put forward by him in November last of an expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council on the lines and on the basis then indicated remained open and that His Majesty's Government were prepared to give immediate effect to that offer

Subject to the consent of the parties affected, His Majesty's Government would be prepared also to reopen the Federal scheme so as to expedite the achievement of Dominion Status and to facilitate the settlement after the War of the issues to which it gave rise

Mr Gandhi expressed appreciation of the spirit in which these proposals were put forward, but made it clear that they did not, in his view, at this stage, meet the full demand of the Congress Party. He suggested, and the Viceroy agreed, that in the circumstances it would be preferable to defer for the present further discussions with the object of a solution of the difficulties which had arisen

### **MAHATMA GANDHI'S STATEMENT REGARDING HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE VICEROY**

*New Delhi, February 6, 1940*

The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's offer consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by British Government whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary. The Congress position is that the test of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without outside interference

I see no prospect whatsoever of a peaceful and honourable settlement between England and India unless the vital difference is obliterated and England decides upon the right course, namely, accepting the position that the time has come when India must be allowed to determine her own constitution and her status. When this is done the question of defence, the question of minorities, the question of Princes and the question of European interests will be automatically dissolved

Let me make this a little clearer. Safeguards for the rights of minorities is not only a common cause but a representative assembly of Indians cannot evolve a stable constitution without the fullest satisfaction being given to the legitimate minorities. I use the word legitimate advisedly because I see that minorities crop up like mushrooms till there will be no majority left. By the fullest satisfaction I mean satisfaction which will not militate against progress of the nation as a whole.

I would therefore in the event of differences refer them to the highest and most impartial tribunal that can be conceived by human ingenuity. Its voice shall be final as to what will amount to the fullest satisfaction of minority interests.

So far as defence is concerned surely it will be the primary concern of free India to make her own arrangement. It may well be that India would want elaborate preparations and would want Britain's help if it is given to enable her to do so. Thanks to Imperial policy, unarmed India is left wholly unprotected except by British bayonets and Indian soldiers which British power has brought into being. It is a position humiliating alike to Britain and India. I am personally not concerned because if I carry India with me I would want nothing beyond a police force for protection against dacoits and the like. But so far as defence is concerned unarmed and peaceful India would rely on the goodwill of the whole world. But I admit that it is only a day-dream at the present moment.

So far as European interests are concerned the emphasis on the word European must be wholly removed. But that does not mean that a free India should be free to confiscate European interests or any other interests. There would be as there should be provision for reasonable compensation for any existing interests which are legitimate and not harmful to the nation. It follows that there can be no question of favouritism which is being enjoyed to-day by European interests. I would regard them as big zamindars or capitalists and they would be placed on the same footing as these.

So far as the Princes are concerned they are free to join the National Assembly which will determine India's

fate not as individuals but as duly elected representatives of their own people. As Princes they are big vassals of the Crown. I fancy they have no status apart from the Crown, certainly not superior to the Crown itself. If the Crown parts with the power it to-day enjoys over the whole of India, naturally the Princes have to, and it should be their pride to look up to the successor of the Crown, namely, the people of India for the preservation of their status. I hope this will not be considered to be a tall claim made by me on behalf not of the Congress, not of any single party, but of the unrepresented dumb millions. No claim made on their behalf can be considered too tall. I am myself an insignificant being. But I am supposed to have some hold over these dumb millions. I know that in every fibre of my being I am also one of them. Without them I am nothing. I do not even want to exist. I want on their behalf an honourable settlement with Britain without even a non-violent fight. My dictionary has no such expression as violent fight. Yesterday I put this view before His Excellency in as courteous and friendly language as I was capable of using. We approached the discussion as personal friends each believing in the other's sincerity. We understood each other and both recognised that there still existed a wide gulf between the position taken by the British Government as explained by him and the position taken by the Congress which I put forward though not as an accredited representative of the Congress but certainly as a self-appointed representative of the dumb millions. We parted as friends. I have no disappointment in me that the negotiations have failed. That failure I am going to use, as I am sure he is going to use as a stepping stone to success. But if that success does not come in the near future I can only say Heaven help India, Britain and the world. The present war must not be decided by a clash of arms but must be decided by the moral strength that each party can show. If Britain cannot recognise India's legitimate claims, what will it be but Britain's moral bankruptcy?

## INDIA AND WAR CRISIS

### WORKING COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION FOR THE OPEN SESSION OF THE CONGRESS

*Patna, Feb. 28 to March 1 1940.*

A Meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held at Patna, from February 28th to March 1st 1940. The Committee discussed the political situation and adopted a resolution to be placed before the Subjects Committee of the 53rd Session of the Indian National Congress to be held at Ramgarh. (For text of resolution see below.)

## RAMGARH CONGRESS

### INDIA AND THE WAR-CRISIS

*Call to the Nation*

*March, 19-20, 1940.*

This Congress, having considered the grave and critical situation resulting from the war in Europe and British policy in regard to it, approves of and endorses the resolutions passed and the action taken on the war situation by the A. I. C. C. and the Working Committee. The Congress considers the declaration by the British Government of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of India's resources in this War, as an affront to them, which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people can accept or tolerate. The recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the War fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India, as well as of other Asiatic and African countries. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be party to the War, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation. The Congress therefore strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and of the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the War. Neither the recruiting nor the money raised in India can be considered to be voluntary contributions



from India. Congressmen, and those under the Congress influence, cannot help in the prosecution of the War with men, money or material.

The Congress hereby declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism and dominion or any other status, within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation, and would bind India in many ways to British policies and economic structure. The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to the other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

The Congress is further of opinion that while it will always be ready, as it ever has been, to make every effort to secure communal harmony, no permanent solution is possible except through a Constituent Assembly, where the rights of all recognised minorities will be fully protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority and minority groups, or by arbitration if agreement is not reached on any point. Any alternative will lack finality. India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity, and the Congress repudiates attempts to divide India or to split up her nationhood. The Congress has always aimed at a constitution where the fullest freedom and opportunities of development are guaranteed to the group and the individual, and social injustice yields place to a juster social order.

The Congress cannot admit the right of the Rulers of Indian States, or of foreign vested interests to come in the way of Indian freedom. Sovereignty in India must rest with the people, whether in the States or the Provinces, and all other interests must be subordinated to their vital interests. The Congress holds that the difficulty raised in regard to the States is of British creation and it will not be satisfactorily solved unless the declaration of the freedom of India from foreign rule is unequivocally made. Foreign interests, if they are not in conflict with the interests of the Indian people, will be protected.

The Congress withdrew the Ministries from the Provinces where the Congress had a majority in order to dissociate India from the War and to enforce the Congress determination to free India from foreign domination. This preliminary step must naturally be followed by Civil Disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress Organisation is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis. The Congress desires to draw the attention of Congressmen to Gandhiji's declaration that he can only undertake the responsibility of declaring Civil Disobedience when he is satisfied that they are strictly observing discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence Pledge.

The Congress seeks to represent and serve all classes and communities without distinction of race or religion, and the struggle for Indian independence is for the freedom of the whole nation. Hence the Congress cherishes the hope that all classes and communities will take part in it. The purpose of Civil Disobedience is to evoke the spirit of sacrifice in the whole nation.

The Congress hereby authorises the All India Congress Committee and in the event of this being necessary, the Working Committee, to take all steps to implement the foregoing resolution, as the Committee concerned may deem necessary.

## MAHATMA GANDHI'S TWO SPEECHES AT RAMGARH

### I

#### AT THE SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

also the delegates. The Working Committee agreed to this and although I wanted to address you before the resolution was adopted, the Committee suggested that I do so after the resolution was disposed of.

"I have come to you to meet you and renew my acquaintance with you, and also give you an opportunity to meet me and find out whether there has been any change in me. I have been in public life for full fifty years; I have been in charge of various organisations and come in contact with millions of people. Besides, I have been in contact with the Working Committee and many of you have been in correspondence with me. It should, therefore, not be difficult for me to remember you.

"All the same I wanted to establish direct contact and know where we stand in relation to each other. I notice that you have made considerable progress in the art of debate. I congratulate you on that, for a democratic organisation does need people who can express themselves clearly and maintain a high level of discussion. I also find that the number of amendments you move has increased. That too is good because we want new ideas. It is good that various points of view should be presented before the public so that if any point that is not accepted to-day may be accepted tomorrow.

"You have adopted this resolution almost unanimously. Only seven or eight among you dissented. They had every right to do so. The passing of this resolution adds to my responsibility, because I was present at the time of discussion. If I wanted I had an opportunity to place my view before you but the Working Committee felt that I should not do so before the resolution had been disposed of and I consented.

"I do not want to reply to what has been said by some of you in the course of the debate. I want to tell you, however, that there have been occasions in the past when I agreed to launch a movement although some of the conditions laid down by me had not been fulfilled, but on this occasion I am going to be very strict, not because I want to be hard but because I want you to realise that the general who has to lead the fight must let his army know his conditions for leading them.

Independence Pledge. You must allow me to tell you that if you do not fulfil those conditions it will not be possible for me to launch a struggle. You will have to find another General. You cannot compel me to lead you against my will. When you appoint me as your general, you must obey my command. There can be no argument about it. Because my only sanction is love, I argue with you, for love must be characterised by patience. I have heard friends criticising the Charkha. I know you are all ready to go to jail but you must earn the right and pay the price for going to jails. You will not be going to jails as criminals.

This condition about Charkha and Khadi has been there since 1920. Our programme and policy have been the same all these days. You might have grown wiser in this matter since then, but I must tell you I have not. The more I think about non-violence, the greater virtues I find in it.

I have been an outlaw since 1918. Before that I was loyal to the empire that I wrote to Lord Chelmsford that I longed to have the same loyalty towards the Empire as a Britisher has in his heart. I wrote those words because I am a believer in truth. Truth is my God and I could not have written anything else if I wanted to be true to myself.

You may have other ways than truth and non-violence but mine is the same old path and, being just a human being like you, I also commit mistakes. Never have I dreamt that I am a Mahatma. We are all equals in the eyes of God. To me Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Harijans are all alike. I cannot be frivolous when I talk of Qaid Azad, Jinnah. He is my brother. I would be happy indeed if he could keep me in his pocket. There was a time when I could say that there was no Muslim whose confidence I did not enjoy. It is my misfortune that it is not so today. I do not read all that appears in the Urdu Press, but perhaps I get a lot of abuses there. I am not sorry for it. I still believe that without Hindu-Muslim settlement there can be no Swaraj. You will perhaps ask in that case why do I talk of fight. I do so because it is to be a fight for the Constitutional Assembly. If Muslims who come to the Constituent Assembly through Muslim votes declare that there is nothing common between Hindus and Muslims

This time I find that the difficulties you would have to face are much greater than those we were faced with on former occasions. These are of two kinds, external and internal. We have declared very clearly what we want. We have made it so clear that further clarification is not possible. Similarly the British Government have also made clear their point of view. Britain is involved in a World War and naturally if we oppose it at this time it will mean trouble. This is the first difficulty. But our real difficulty is an internal one. I have written on several occasions that in Civil Disobedience one need not be afraid of external difficulties if the fight is carried on proper lines.

Our internal difficulty is that we have a large number of Congress members on our Register. People have joined us because they find that the Congress has acquired power. Many people who did not join the Congress before have now joined it. They have harmed it because they have joined perhaps with selfish motives. In a democratic organisation we cannot prevent such people from joining unless our organisation is so strong that sheer weight of public opinion would compel them to remain out.

That cannot happen so long as our contact with primary Congress members is only for voting purpose. There is no discipline in the Congress. There are a number of groups and there are quarrels and squabbles. We seem not to believe in non-violence as regards our own internal organisation. Wherever I go I hear the same complaint. My conception of democracy is not the formation of groups quarrelling with one another to such an extent as would destroy the organisation itself. Again we are not only a democratic organisation. We are also a fighting organisation. Our fight is not yet over. When we march as an army, we are no longer a democracy. As soldiers we have got to take orders from the General and obey them implicitly. His word must be law. I am your General. It should not mean that I should keep you in dark regarding my feelings. I do not know of any General in history who was so powerless as I am. I have no sanctions. My only sanction is love. In one way it is a great thing but in another sense it can also be worthless. I can say I cherish love for all in my heart. Perhaps you also do so but your love must be active. You must fulfil the conditions set down in the

Independence Pledge. You must allow me to tell you that if you do not fulfil those conditions it will not be possible for me to launch a struggle. You will have to find another General. You cannot compel me to lead you against my will. When you appoint me as your general, you must obey my command. There can be no argument about it. Because my only sanction is love, I argue with you, for love must be characterised by patience. I have heard friends criticising the Charkha. I know you are all ready to go to jails but you must earn the right and pay the price for going to jails. You will not be going to jails as criminals.

This condition about Charkha and Khadi has been there since 1920. Our programme and policy have been the same all these days. You might have grown wiser in this matter since then, but I must tell you I have not. The more I think about non-violence, the greater virtues I find in it.

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then alone I would give up all hope, but even then I would argue with them because they read the Quran and I have also studied something of that Holy Book. I will tell them that God makes no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. When Lord Zetland was wounded I was deeply pained. I felt as if I was myself wounded. If you want me you must understand this. It is my constant endeavour to create good-will in the opponent's mind. I fight British Imperialism but I have no quarrel with those who run the Imperialist machine. I do not want to destroy them but I want to bring about a change in them.

You must know that compromise is in my very being. I will go to the Viceroy fifty times if there is need for it. When I was fighting General Smuts, at the very last moment I telephoned to him to try and see if the fight could be abandoned. He put down the receiver in anger. I was not sorry because thereby he did not insult me and you know we are now great friends. If you have suspicion that I will compromise, you must believe that, that compromise will not be at the cost of the country. I will not sell India. Whatever I do I do to increase the strength of our country. The basis of my fight is love for the opponent. If I had no love in my heart for the Dutch and the English I would not have been able to fight them in South Africa.

Somebody has suggested that the word "mass" does not appear in the resolution in reference to civil disobedience. If it is not to be mass civil disobedience why should I come to you? If it were to be done by a handful of people you would not find me here arguing with you. You might perhaps not be taking these things seriously, but in my mind there is no other thought. My mind is wholly concentrated on trying this great experiment with your help and support, because it will not only benefit India but the whole world.

Every Congress Committee must therefore become a unit of Satyagraha. To that extent democracy comes to an end. To that extent democratic organisation like ours will have to follow implicitly my instruction. If that does not happen, millions of people who follow us will be sacrificed. I will not allow that to happen. I may have to lay down my life for preserving the power that has accrued to India. You may not be able to analyse that power but it is there. It is the power of Ahimsa.

I do not want to come in if there is anyone who wants to launch a struggle. But he can do so outside the Congress. If he wants to remain in the Congress he must follow the Congress programme and policy. Of course it is possible for anyone to remain in the Congress and yet disobey it, but that won't be the way of Satyagraha which never harms the man who uses the weapon. The passing of the resolution does not bind you yet. It is still open to you to reverse it. You may have another methods, but so far I am concerned I have only the same old programme. I know that that method has never harmed anyone who has followed it and even now if I can get your whole-hearted support and co-operation, I can show you what can be achieved within even a month.

## II

### IN THE OPEN SESSION

20-3-1940.

I was glad to have the opportunity of listening to the speakers who moved the amendments. The name of Satyagraha was on their lips, and it reminded me of the Biblical phrase "Not those who say 'Lord' 'Lord' but those who do the will of God will find Him." (Cheers) I do not need your cheers, I want to win your hearts and your intellects, and cheers and acclamations stand in the way of winning them. Let me therefore warn you that not those who shout 'Satyagraha', 'Satyagraha', will do Satyagraha but those who will work for it. And the essence of Satyagraha is to carry out in letter and spirit the word of him whom you have chosen as your general, and to eschew the things he asks you to avoid. For without Satyagraha carried out in the proper spirit, there is no victory and no Swaraj.

I believe with some of you who said that it is our duty to shake ourselves free from slavery. But how are we to do it? Supposing a few dacoits come and take possession of our house and drive us out, it is of course our duty to fight the dacoits and get our house back from them. But how can we do it? We have to plan and prepare for it. Therefore when I saw you acclaiming the speaker who said that we were ready, I was shocked. For I know that



we are not ready. And knowing this, how can I ask you to fight? I know that with such as you I can only have defeat. And defeat I do not want, and defeat I have never known, not even in Rajkot, whatever you may say to the contrary. The word 'defeat' is not to be found in my dictionary, and everyone who is selected as a recruit in my army may be sure that there is no defeat for a Satyagrahi.

One of the speakers said that he had no quarrel with the charka, but he wanted the charka to be divorced from Satyagraha. Well I tell you, as I have been telling you these 20 years, that there is a vital connection between Satyagraha and charkha, and the more I find that belief challenged the more I am confirmed in it. Otherwise I am no fool to persist in turning the charkha, day in and day out, at home and even on trains, in the teeth of medical advice. I want you too to be turning the charkha with the same faith. And unless you do it and unless you habitually use khadi you will deceive me and deceive the world.

I shall of course die with non-violence on my lips, but you are not wedded to it in the sense I am, and so it is open to you to have another programme and to make our country free. But if you will not do this, nor turn the charkha, and want me to fight, it will be an impossible situation.

I know that you will not fight unless you have me with you, but then you must know that I am here and I would fight only as a representative of those dumb millions for whom I live and for whom I want to die. My loyalty to them is greater than any other loyalty, and it is for them that I would not give up the charkha even if you were to forsake me or kill me. For I know that, if I were to relax the conditions of the charkha, I should bring ruin upon those dumb millions for whom I have to answer before God. If, therefore, you do not believe in the charkha in the sense I believe in it, I implore you to leave me. The charkha is an outward symbol of truth and non-violence, and unless you have them in your hearts you will not take to the charkha either. Remember, therefore, that you have to fulfil both the internal and external conditions. If you fulfil the internal condition, you will cease

to hate your opponent, you will not seek or work for his destruction, but pray to God to have mercy on him. Do not, therefore, concentrate on showing the misdeeds of the Government, for we have to convert and befriend those who run it. And after all no one is wicked by nature. And if others are wicked, are we the less so? That attitude is inherent in Satyagraha, and if you do not subscribe to it, even then I would ask you to leave me. For without a belief in my programme and without an acceptance of my condition you will ruin me, ruin yourselves and ruin the cause.

### EVERY CONGRESS COMMITTEE A SATYAGRAHI COMMITTEE

By Mahatma Gandhi

*Sevagram-Wardha, 25 March 1940.*

When I said at the Subjects Committee meeting at Ramgarh that every Congress Committee should become a Satyagrahi Committee I meant every word of what I said as I meant every word of everything else I said. I would like every Congressman who desires to serve in the Satyagrah Sena to read my two speeches made at Ramgarh as well as whatever else I may write in Harijan on the struggle and carry out the instructions meant for him or her.

In the coming struggle, if it must come, no half-hearted loyalty will answer the purpose. Imagine a general marching to battle with doubting, ill prepared soldiers. He will surely march to defeat. I will not consciously make any such fatal experiment. This is not meant to frighten Congressmen. If they have the will, they will not find my instructions difficult to follow. Correspondents tell me that though they have no faith in me or the Charkha they ply the latter for the sake of discipline. I do not understand this language. Can a general fight on the strength of soldiers who, he knows, have no faith in him? The plain meaning of this language is that the correspondents believe in mass action but do not believe in the connection I see between it and the Charkha etc., if the action is to be non-violent. They believe in my hold on the masses but they do not believe in the things which I believe have given me that hold. They merely want to exploit me and will grudg-

ingly pay the price which my ignorance or obstinacy (according to them) demands. I do not call this discipline. True discipline gives enthusiastic obedience to instructions even though they do not satisfy reason. A volunteer exercises his reason when he chooses his general but after having made the choice, he does not waste his time and energy in scanning every instruction and testing it on the anvil of his reason before following it. "Theirs is not to reason why."

Now for my instructions:—

Every Congress Committee should become a Satyagrah Committee and register such Congressmen who believe in the cultivation of the spirit of goodwill towards all, who have no untouchability in them in any shape or form, who would spin regularly and who habitually use Khaddar to the exclusion of all other cloth. I would expect those who thus register their names with their Committee to devote the whole of their spare time to the constructive programme. If the response is sincere, these Satyagrah Committees would become busy spinning depots. They will work in conjunction with and under the guidance of A. I. S. A. branches in a businesslike manner so that there remain in the jurisdiction of the Committees no Congressmen who have not adopted Khaddar for exclusive use. I shall expect businesslike reports to be sent from provincial headquarters to the A. I. C. C. as to the progress of the work of the Satyagrah Committees. Seeing that this registration is to be purely voluntary, the reports would mention the numbers both of those who give their names for registration and those who do not.

The registered Satyagrahis will keep a diary of the work that they do from day to day. Their work, besides their own spinning, will consist in visiting the primary members and inducing them to use Khadi, spin and register themselves. Whether they do so or not, contact should be maintained with them.

There should be visits paid to Harijan homes and their difficulties removed so far as possible.

Needless to say that names should be registered only of those who are willing and able to suffer imprisonment.

No financial assistance is to be expected by Satyagrahi prisoners whether for themselves or their dependents.

So much for active Satyagrahis. But there is a much larger class of men and women who, though they will not spin or court or suffer imprisonment, believe in the two cardinal principles of Satyagrah and welcome and wish well to the struggle. These I will call passive Satyagrahis. They will help equally with the active ones, if they will not interfere with the course of the struggle by themselves courting imprisonment or aiding or precipitating strikes of labourers or students. Those who out of overzeal or for any other cause will act contrary to these instructions will harm the struggle and may even compel me to suspend it. When the forces of violence are let loose all over the world and when nations reputed to be most civilized cannot think of any force other than that of arms for the settlement of their disputes, I hope that it will be possible to say of India she fought and won the battle of freedom by purely peaceful means.

I am quite clear in my mind that, given the co-operation of politically minded India, the attainment of India's freedom is perfectly possible through unmixed non-violence. The world does not believe our pretention of non-violence. Let alone the world, I the self-styled general have repeatedly admitted that we have violence in our hearts, that we are often violent to one another in our mutual dealings. I must confess that I will not be able to fight so long as we have violence in our midst. But I will fight if the proposed register is honest and if those who courageously keep out will not disturb the even course of the struggle.

Non-violent action means mobilisation of world opinion in our favour. I know that a growing number of thinking men and women of the world are sick of the war spirit; they are longing for a way of peace and they are looking to India to point that way. We cannot have that opinion on our side if we are not honestly non-violent. Let me repeat what I have said in these columns that I shall be able to fight with a very small army of honest Satyagrahis but shall feel powerless and embarrassed, if I have a huge army in which I can have no trust or as to whose behaviour I am not always sure.

I expect the A. I. C. C. to organise Satyagrah Committees and report to me from time to time of the progress made. If there is an enthusiastic response, inside of one month it should be possible to forecast the exact period required to put the Satyagrah Committees in working order.

## LORD ZETLAND IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*April, 1940.*

Negotiations, not dictation, was Britain's policy in the settlement of India's constitutional problem, declared Lord Zetland (Secretary of State for India) in the House of Lords when the Government sought Parliament's approval for the continuance of the Proclamations investing in the Governors control of those Provinces where the Ministries had resigned.

But, he added, if discussions were to be fruitful, there must be on all sides a real spirit of compromise. The future fate of India hung upon whether the Congress would refrain from closing the door upon that unity of India which the Congress itself so passionately desired.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Sir Hugh O'Neill (Under-Secretary for India) said that, as none of its advances had met with any response, there did not seem anything further that the British Government could do. If civil disobedience were started, the Government would be bound to take full measures to counteract it. Ordered government must be carried on, especially in time of war.

Lord Zetland said that the British Government realised that for varying reasons the three main parties to the controversy—the Congress, the All-India Muslim League and the Princes—had serious objections to the federal provisions of the Government of India Act.

"We have, therefore, said that we are desirous of consulting those interested with a view to ascertaining the lines on which they wish to see these provisions altered. We have made that offer because we accept the reasonableness of the claim that Indians themselves should play a vital part in devising the sort of constitution

which they deem best suited to the circumstances of their country.

"But we have also said that we cannot wholly disassociate ourselves from the shaping of the future constitution of the country, and I should have thought that our reasons for saying that would have been both understood and accepted as valid . . . . They are rooted in the history of the past 200 years.

"Let me merely, by way of example, take the case of the Princes to illustrate what I mean. Mr. Gandhi has described the Princes of India as things of our creation. I feel sure that no reflection so fair-minded a critic as Mr. Gandhi will be willing to agree that circumstances of the time, the force of events, their interaction and their consequences, which are things of which the content of history is made up, bear far greater responsibility for the existence of the Princes than do His Majesty's Government. We made treaties with them certainly, but we could not have done so if they had not been there.

"Then, too, we have a stake in the country, which is equally the outcome of historical forces.

"And there is the question of the defence of the country, which, for the time being at any rate, and possibly for many years to come, an independent India wholly disassociated from Great Britain would admittedly not be in a position to secure.

"And there are the minorities, to whom we are under obligations which, once more, are embedded in the very texture of the tapestry of history, in that they have enjoyed their peaceful evolution as a result, in part, of the restoration of order by the British after confusion and civil war, which attended the dissolution of the Moghul Empire and, in part, of the administrative unity established during the long term of British rule throughout the land.

But, said Lord Zetland, all this "does not mean that the future constitution of India is to be a constitution dictated by the Government and Parliament of this country against the wishes of the Indian people. The

undertaking given by His Majesty's Government to examine the constitutional field in consultation with the representatives of all parties and interests in India surely connotes not dictation, but negotiation.

"Admittedly a substantial measure of agreement amongst the communities in India is essential if the vision of a united India, which has inspired the labours of so many Indians and Englishmen, is to become a reality, for I cannot believe that any Government or Parliament in this country would attempt to impose by force upon, for example, the 80,000,000 Muslim subjects of His Majesty in India a form of constitution, under which they would not live peacefully and contentedly.

"So far as it lies within my power to do so, I shall labour for reconciliation between these two great communities, Muslims and Hindus, who after all, whatever their differences of religion of culture and of outlook upon life, have lived side by side in India for nigh upon a thousand years.

"But I realise how restricted is my own power or influence, for the plain fact of the matter is that the Congress Party have raised in the minds of many Muslims apprehensions, which only they themselves can allay, and the question of vital import so far as the future of India is concerned is this: Will the Congress refrain from closing the door upon that unity of India, which they themselves so passionately desire?

"It is not too much to say that upon the answer, which the Congress Party will give to that question hangs the future fate of India."

The continuance of the Proclamations was approved by both Houses.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Wardha, April 15—19 1940.*

### SATYAGRAHA

The Working Committee have given full consideration to the situation in the country as it has developed since the Ramgarh Congress and to the necessity for preparing the

Congress organisation for Satyagraha which the Ramgarh Congress declared was inevitable in the future. The Committee welcomes the steps taken by the Provincial Congress Committees, in pursuance of the directions issued by Gandhiji to function as Satyagraha Committee and to enrol active and passive satyagrahis. The Committee trust that all Congress Committees throughout the country will pursue this programme with all earnestness and thoroughness, and will put their affairs in order for such action as may be required of them. The Committee recommend that those members of Congress executives who are unable to take the prescribed pledge and shoulder the burden of a struggle under the disciplined guidance of the Congress, will withdraw from their executive positions. The Committee lay stress again on the fulfilment of the conditions laid down by Gandhiji, compliance with which is essential for Civil Disobedience.

## NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA

### MR. AMERY'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*May, 1940.*

"The attainment by India of free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth is the goal of our policy, as it was of the late Government," declared Mr. L. S. Amery, the new Secretary of State for India, in a statement in the House of Commons.

"We recognise that it is for Indians themselves to play a vital part in devising a form of constitution best adapted to India's conditions and India's outlook. The promise already given that the present scheme of the Act of 1935 and the policy and plans on which it is based are to be open to re-examination at the end of the war necessarily implies discussion and negotiation and not dictation.

"We have no desire to delay any of the steps that may pave the way towards an agreed settlement that will take account of the legitimate claims of all communities and interests," added Mr. Amery. "On the contrary, we have been, and are, only too anxious to make our contribution



ling succession and, in particular, by the misfortune that have fallen the people of France. The events have already had far-reaching consequences, and they are likely to be followed by other happenings which will lead to novel situations and complex problems.

Ever since the commencement of the European war, the Congress has followed a policy which was based on its principles and on the attitude of the British Government towards the demand that India should function as a free and independent country. This policy was confirmed in the Ramgarh resolution. The manner of the application of this policy will necessarily depend on the situation which changes from day to day. Problems which were distant are now near at hand and may soon demand solution. The problem of the achievement of national freedom has now to be considered along with the allied one of its maintenance and the defence of the country against possible external aggression and internal disorder.

The war in Europe, resulting from a desire for imperialist domination over other peoples and countries, and a suicidal race in armaments has led to human sorrow and misery on a scale hitherto unknown. It has demonstrated the inefficacy of organised violence, on however vast a scale, for the defence of national freedom and the liberties of peoples. It has shown beyond a doubt that warfare cannot lead to peace and freedom, and the choice before the world is uttermost degradation and destruction through warfare or the way of peace and non-violence on a basis of freedom for all peoples. Mahatma Gandhi has presented to the peoples of the world, crying for relief from the crushing burden of war, a weapon in the shape of organised non-violence designed to take the place of war for the defence of

towards such a settlement. The difficulty at this moment lies in an acute cleavage of opinion in India, affecting issues fundamental to the character of the future constitution and even to an approach to the problem.

"I refuse to regard the cleavage as unbridgeable. Even if no final agreement on the major issue is in sight, I cannot think it beyond the resources of Indian statesmanship to find, at any rate, such provisional accommodation as would admit resumption of office with general consent by Ministers in the provinces and the appointment to the Government Executive Council of representative public men on the basis already offered.

"I believe that such a provisional solution of the present deadlock—provisional no doubt, but still easing the way to an eventual agreement—would be eagerly welcomed by an overwhelming body of Indian public opinion.

"India from the outset of the war has made manifest her sympathy and support for the Allied cause, and her anxiety to lend to that cause all aid, in her power.

"It is the sincere and earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that in the situation which faces the whole civilised world to-day, existing differences may be put aside and that the leaders of the great political parties in India will come together in agreement in support of the common effort.

"The Viceroy, with the approval of the Government, has spared no effort to bring the parties together and to endeavour to find a basis for progress which will be generally acceptable. His own readiness to help in any way he can remains unabated."

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Wardha, June 17—21, 1940.*

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The following statement was issued on the political situation:

The Working Committee have been deeply moved by the tragic events that have taken place in Europe in start-

ling succession and, in particular, by the misfortune that have fallen the people of France. The events have already had far-reaching consequences, and they are likely to be followed by other happenings which will lead to novel situations and complex problems.

Ever since the commencement of the European war, the Congress has followed a policy which was based on its principles and on the attitude of the British Government towards the demand that India should function as a free and independent country. This policy was confirmed in the Ramgarh resolution. The manner of the application of this policy will necessarily depend on the situation which changes from day to day. Problems which were distant are now near at hand and may soon demand solution. The problem of the achievement of national freedom has now to be considered along with the allied one of its maintenance and the defence of the country against possible external aggression and internal disorder.

The war in Europe, resulting from a desire for imperialist domination over other peoples and countries, and a suicidal race in armaments has led to human sorrow and misery on a scale hitherto unknown. It has demonstrated the inefficacy of organised violence, on however vast a scale, for the defence of national freedom and the liberties of peoples. It has shown beyond a doubt that warfare cannot lead to peace and freedom, and the choice before the world is uttermost degradation and destruction through warfare or the way of peace and non-violence on a basis of freedom for all peoples. Mahatma Gandhi has presented to the peoples of the world, crying for relief from the crushing burden of war, a weapon in the shape of organised non-violence designed to take the place of war for the defence of a people's rights and freedom against armed aggression. He feels that at this critical phase in the history of man, the Congress should enforce this ideal by itself declaring that it does not want that India should maintain armed forces to defend her freedom against external aggression or internal disorder.

While the Working Committee hold that the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in their struggle for independence, the Committee

cannot ignore the present imperfections and failings in this respect of the human elements that they have to deal with, and the possible dangers in a period of transition and dynamic change, until the Congress has acquired non-violent control over the people in adequate measure and the people have imbibed sufficiently the lesson of organised non-violence. The Committee have deliberated over the problem that has thus arisen and have come to the conclusion that they are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji. But they recognise that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India and the world in regard to external aggression and internal disorder.

Many of the problems which the Working Committee have considered in this connexion are not of the present, though they may be of the near future. The Committee wish to make it clear that the methods and basic policy of non-violence in the national struggle for freedom continue with full force and are not affected in the least by the inability to extend it to the region of national defence.

The War Committees that are being formed are definitely aimed at increasing the War effort. In view of the Congress policy, they cannot be supported, and Congressmen cannot participate in them or contribute to war funds. Nor can Congressmen associate themselves with Government-controlled civic guards.

The Working Committee advises Congress Committees to encourage in every way the recruitment and training of peaceful volunteers for national service. Congress Committees should also organise people in villages and other areas for self-defence and in order to maintain a sense of public security in their respective areas. This should be done on a non-communal basis and in full co-operation with all other groups interested in this task.

In view of the difficult times that loom ahead, it is essential that the Congress should function as an active and disciplined organisation. Provincial Committees are enjoined to take necessary steps for this purpose. They should realise that it is of urgent and vital importance that

the Congress should function in this way in these days of crisis, and should not be merely a roll of vast numbers of inactive members. All members of executive committees, in particular, are expected to take a continuous and active part in Congress work, and those who are unwilling or unable to do so are failing in their duty to the country and are of no service to the organisation.

The critical situation that faces the world today requires vigilant attention and action whenever needed. For this purpose the Working Committee will meet at frequent intervals, and all members must keep in readiness to obey an urgent summons. The All India Congress Committees should be summoned to meet in the last week of July.

### SOME VITAL QUESTIONS

By Mahatma Gandhi

(New Delhi, 1-7-40)

H. E. the Viceroy is again conferring with leaders of parties. I was invited, but not as a party leader or a leader at all. I was invited as a friend to help him, if I could, to come to a definite conclusion, especially to interpret the Congress mind to him. It is better, in the light of what is happening (and things will presently move with lightning velocity), to consider some of the questions that will demand quick decision, if they will not have been decided before these lines are in print.

The first thing that everyone has to consider for himself is whether Dominion Status of the Westminster variety can be acceptable to India. If it has not become a myth already, it will be at the end of the war. Britain herself, victorious or defeated, will never be the same as she has been for these few hundred years. But this much is certain that her defeat, if it must come, will certainly be glorious. If she is defeated, she will be because no other Power similarly situated could have avoided defeat. I cannot say the same of her victory. It will be brought by a progressive adoption of the same means as the totalitarian States have adopted. I must say with the deepest pain that British statesmen have rejected the only moral influence they could easily have got from the Congress to turn the scales in Britain's favour. It is no blame to her statesmen that they have not availed themselves of that

Government of India has no other occupation but that of preparing India for defending Britain. It is an illusion to talk of preparing India for self-defence. No Power has eyes on India except as a British possession. As such she is a rich prize. Is not India the brightest jewel in the British Crown? But I own that, if India is to learn the trade of war, she can now have her apprenticeship to the extent that the British masters will allow.

The Congress has to make its choice. The temptation is irresistible. Congressmen can again become Cabinet Ministers. They may also be Ministers or Members at the Centre. They will have an insight into the war machine. They will watch from inside (again to the extent allowed) the Englishman at work when engaged in a life and death struggle. They will have to raise crores of rupees and dispose of them in the war effort. If I have my way, I would have the Congress to resist the irresistible temptation and not grudge those who believe in the accepted method filling all these posts. There will be Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and others taking up their posts as they have done before now. They too are our countrymen. We must give them credit for good faith. Let us who believe in Independence and the only way to attain it, hold fast to the objective and the means. I can see much good coming out of this division of functions. For the Congress to merge itself into the stereotyped method would be a disaster of the first magnitude. If, on the other hand, the Congress sticks to its colours, it is sure to fight its way to its goal even before the war is over, provided that the fight is purely, truly and demonstrably non-violent.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Delhi, July 3—7 1940.*

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The Working Committee have noted the serious happenings which have called forth fresh appeals to bring about a solution of the deadlock in the Indian political situation; and in view of the desirability of clarifying the Congress position they have earnestly examined the whole

influence. They did not see the need of it. It may well be that they did not perceive the moral influence itself which I have claimed for the Congress. Whatever may be the case, it is clear to me that India's immediate objective must be unadulterated Independence. This is no time for mincing words or hiding our thoughts, I cannot think of anyone wanting less than Independence for his country, if he can get it. No country has ever got it without its people having fought for it. Anyway the Congress made up its mind long ago. Even if India is to render effective help to Britain, it can come from a free India. Crores may be drained from India as of yore; thousands of men may be hired as soldiers or camp followers out of her teeming millions. All such contributions will be from a helpless India. They cannot raise the moral status of Britain.

The next question for consideration is that of providing for internal disorder and external invasion. The raising of private armies will be worse than useless. It will never be allowed. No Power, whether foreign or swadeshi, can tolerate private armies. Those, therefore, who believe in the necessity of India having armed forces will be driven sooner or later to enlist themselves under the British banner. It is the logical outcome of the belief. The Working Committee have taken the decision on the point. If it is to abide, I have little doubt that they will presently have to advise Congressmen to enlist in the usual way. That would mean an end to the slogan of immediate Independence and an end also to non-violence of the true brand. I shall hope to the last that, for the sake of themselves, India, aye Britain herself, and humanity, Congressmen will resolutely decline to have anything to do with the use of arms for any of the two purposes. I feel strongly that the future of humanity lies in the hands of the Congress. May God give wisdom and courage to Congressmen to take the right step.

The offer of enlarging the Viceroy's Council is on the tapis. The Congress cannot countenance it, so long as it swears by Independence and non-violence. But if it sidetracks them, it will be logically driven to reconstructing Congress' ministries in the Provinces. This means the Congress becoming a vital part of the war machine. The

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purposes. Collections ordered to be made by officials from peasant and wage-earners are bound to result in considerable harassment, coercion and distress. Compulsory levies are not only against the existing law of the land as well as the emergency laws but are also opposed to the declared policy of responsible officers of the Government. All compulsory levies and coercion in the collection of funds should be immediately stopped, and, where such compulsion is applied, people should refuse to submit to it.

### ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

*Poona, July 27-28, 1940.*

The following resolutions as recommended by the Working Committee were passed at the A.I.C.C. Meeting held at Poona :

#### WARDHA STATEMENT

The A.I.C.C. has considered the statement issued by the Working Committee from Wardha on June 21, 1940 and confirmed it. The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that as explained therein, while the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in the struggle for independence, it is unable, in the present circumstances to declare that the principle should be extended to free India's national defence.

The A.I.C.C. desire to affirm that the Congress organisation should continue to be conducted on the principle of non-violence and all Congress volunteers are bound by their pledge to remain non-violent in the discharge of their duty and no Congress Volunteers Organisation can be formed or maintained except on that basis. Any other volunteer organisation for the purpose of self-defence with which Congressmen are associated must likewise adhere to non-violence.

#### DELHI RESOLUTION

The meeting of the All India Congress Committee confirms the Working Committee's Delhi resolution of July 7, 1940.

situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs.

The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgment by Great Britain of the complete Independence of India, is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be immediately made and that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre, which though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature, and secure the closest co-operation of the Responsible Government in the provinces.

The Working Committee are of opinion that unless the aforesaid declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay, all efforts at organizing the material and moral resources of the country for Defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country, and will therefore be ineffective. The Working Committee declare that if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the Defence of the country.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Poona, July 25-27, 1940.*

The Working Committee adopted the two resolutions confirming the resolutions passed at Wardha and Delhi to be placed before the A.I.C.C. (For text of resolutions see below.)

The Working Committee also passed the following resolution:

## COMPULSORY LEVIES

The Working Committee have received reports from many parts of the country that compulsion is being applied on a considerable scale, on the part of subordinate officials for the purpose of realising contributions for war

discharge of a duty carries no merit, even as payment of a debt does not. Nevertheless mention of the restraint becomes relevant in order to show that but for that restraint a conflagration may have burst forth whose effect no one can foresee.

It is true that civil disobedience remains in suspension also because of the internal defects in the Congress organisation. But I have said repeatedly that, if the Congress is goaded to it, the science of satyagraha is not without a mode of application in spite of the internal weaknesses. Therefore the final and deciding motive for suspension is undoubtedly the desire not to embarrass the British Government at the present moment.

But this restraint has its limits. Just a suspicion is growing among Congressmen that the British authority is taking advantage of the restraint to crush the Congress. They point for example to the numerous arrests of Congressmen. The opposition on the part of so many members of the A.I.C.C. to the ratification of the Delhi resolution is, as the Maulana Sahib has said, a sign of their resentment at the feeling that the High Command was letting the British Government to get the better of the Congress. If that suspicion is proved to be well grounded, nothing on earth can possibly deter me from adopting some form of effective satyagraha. But it is my prayer and corresponding effort to prevent it until the clouds lift from Great Britain. I do not want her humiliation in order to gain India's freedom. Such freedom, if it were attainable, cannot be manfully retained.

I have dealt with the one danger signal on which I can write with special knowledge. There are several others which I can easily mention and which are no less grave. But these I must not mention.

If I have publicly discussed one danger, I have done so because the Congress is connected with it and I have to say what is expected of Congressmen. If I retired from the Congress at Bombay in 1934, I did so to render greater service. Events have justified the retirement. The present isolation too has the same motive behind it. So far

## OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

By Mahatma Gandhi

*(Seragram 31-7-40)*

It is unfortunate that in answer to Mr. Sorensen's very relevant question the Secretary of State for India was betrayed into giving a reply which shows want of appreciation of the gravity of the situation in India. Who could have known the gravity of the European situation before the declaration of war by the British Government? But the British ministers knew how very grave the situation had become since Munich. They were so appalled by the gravity that they put off the declaration as long as they could. Similarly the layman does not know anything of the gravity of the situation in India. But the Secretary of State is not a layman. What he does not know, nobody else should know. And yet I venture to suggest to him that his questioner gauged the situation more accurately than he himself did, taking his answer at its face value.

In ordinary times such ignorance as Col. Amery's answer shows may be excusable. At this moment it is unpardonable. I do not propose to enlighten him on all I know. I dare not publicly exhibit all the danger signals. It would be an unfriendly act on my part to do so. Even the warning I am giving here might have been privately given. I have slept several nights over the answer. I came to the conclusion that to suppress altogether from the public what I know would also be an unfriendly act. In spite of my isolation from the Congress, I flatter myself with the belief that a large part of the public still seek my guidance and will continue to do so, as long as I am believed to represent the spirit of Satyagraha more fully than any other person in India.

Col. Amery has grievously erred in underrating the restraint that the Congress has exercised in postponing civil disobedience in order not to embarrass the British Government at a most critical period in the history of the British. The restraint expects no appreciation. It is inherent in satyagraha. Therefore it is a duty. And the

prerequisite to their joint collaboration at the Centre. Such agreement was unfortunately not reached, and in the circumstances no progress was then possible.

"During the earlier part of this year I continued my efforts to bring political parties together. In these last few weeks I again entered into conversations with prominent political personages in British India and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, the results of which have been reported to His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government have seen also the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha.

"It is clear that the earlier differences which had prevented the achievement of national unity remain unbridged. Deeply as His Majesty's Government regret this, they do not feel that they should any longer, because of these differences, postpone the expansion of the Governor-General's Council, and the establishment of a body which will more closely associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war by the Central Government.

"They have authorised me accordingly to invite a certain number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council. They have authorised me further to establish a War Advisory Council, which would meet at regular intervals, and which would contain representatives of the Indian States, and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole.

"The conversations which have taken place, and the resolutions of the bodies which I have just mentioned, make it clear however that there is still in certain quarters doubt as to the intentions of His Majesty's Government for the constitutional future of India, and that there is doubt, too, as to whether the position of minorities, whether political or religious, is sufficiently safeguarded in relation to any constitutional change by the assurance already given. There are two main points that have emerged. On those two points His Majesty's Government now desire me to make their position clear.

as I can judge the immediate future, satyagraha, if it comes, will be confined only to those whom I may select. The rest will be expected not to interfere with the course I may adopt. All will render very substantial help, if they will carry out the instructions that may be issued for them. One permanent instruction is:—leave the Congress if you do not believe in the constructive programme, especially spinning and khadi which are visible symbols of adherence to the Congress, and if you do not believe in truth and non-violence—the latter in the restricted sense now given to it by the recent resolution. If this elementary requirement is not fulfilled, any satyagraha that I may lead will be of no avail to the Congress. It will merely satisfy my satyagrahi soul.

### THE VICEROY'S STATEMENT

*Aug. 8, 1940.*

"India's anxiety at this moment of critical importance in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression to contribute to the full to the common cause and to the triumph of our common ideals is manifest. She has already made a mighty contribution. She is anxious to make a greater contribution still.

"His Majesty's Government are deeply concerned that that unity of national purpose in India which would enable her to do so should be achieved at as early a moment as possible. They feel that some further statement of their intentions may help to promote that unity. In that hope they have authorised me to make the present statement.

"Last October His Majesty's Government again made it clear that Dominion Status was their objective for India. They added that they were ready to authorise the expansion of the Governor-General's Council to include a certain number of representatives of political parties, and they proposed the establishment of a Consultative Committee. In order to facilitate harmonious co-operation it was obvious that some measure of agreement in the Provinces between the major parties was a desirable

prerequisite to their joint collaboration at the Centre. Such agreement was unfortunately not reached, and in the circumstances no progress was then possible.

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"The first is to the position of minorities in relation to any future constitutional scheme. It has already been made clear that my declaration of last October does not exclude examination of any part either of the Act of 1935 or of the policy and plans on which it is based. His Majesty's Government's concern that full weight should be given to the views of the minorities in any revision has also been brought out. That remains the position of His Majesty's Government.

"It goes without saying that they could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government.

"The second point of general interest is the machinery for building within the British Commonwealth of Nations a new constitutional scheme when the time comes. There has been very strong insistence that the framing of that scheme should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves, and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life.

"His Majesty's Government are in sympathy with that desire, and wish to see it given the fullest practical expression subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed upon her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility.

"It is clear that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved. But His Majesty's Government authorise me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war with the least possible delay of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree."

"Meanwhile they will welcome and promote in any way possible every sincere and practical step that may be taken by representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friendly agreement, firstly, on the form which the post-war representative body should take, and the methods by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and secondly upon the principles and outlines of the constitution itself.

"They trust however that for the period of the war (with the Central Government reconstituted and strengthened in the manner I have described and with the help of the War Advisory Council) all parties, communities and interests will combine and co-operate in making a notable Indian contribution to the victory of the world cause which is at stake. Moreover they hope that in this process new bonds of union and understanding will emerge and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.

## SPEECH OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*August 14, 1940.*

Initiating the debate on India in the House of Commons Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India, spoke on the background of political controversy in India and the deadlock, which had led up to the recent statement by the Viceroy.

Mr. Amery said: "I hope I may claim the indulgence of the House this evening, not only because this is the first time after a long interval of years that I have spoken at this box, but also because of the importance and difficulty of the subject with which I have to deal. To keep one's balance steadily along a knife-edge of ice in the high Alps is a much easier task than threading one's way without stumbling or offence through the intricate pitfall-strewn maze of the present Indian situation.

So I trust that members, before they enter upon a discussion of the important statement issued by the

Viceroy last week, will bear patiently with me while I endeavour to say something about the back-ground of the political controversy and deadlock which has led up to that statement. For I think it is only in that way that the full significance and purport of Lord Linlithgow's initiative and of the decision of His Majesty's Government in this matter can be rightly understood.

Five years have passed since the passage of the Government of India Act. That measure, the fruit of a long series of commission and conferences as well as of many stirring debates, represented a remarkable effort of constructive statesmanship on the part of this House. So far as the provincial part of the Act is concerned it presently came into operation and is still being worked successfully in four out of the eleven provinces.

If it is temporarily suspended in the other seven, that has not been due to any failure on the part of the provincial ministries to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them or to any conflict between them and the provincial Governors or the Central Government, but to purely extraneous causes of which I shall have something to say in a moment.

Whether the Central provisions of the Act might have worked equally well if they could have been put into operation promptly may be an open question. What is certain is that the delays involved, inevitable as they may have been, have afforded occasion for the development of a volume of adverse criticism and opposition, in the face of which their enforcement could no longer serve the purpose for which they were originally devised. What is, however, essential to keep in mind is that this opposition comes from different quarters and, indeed, is based on opposite reasons.

The constitutional deadlock in India is not so much between His Majesty's Government and a consentient Indian opposition as between the main elements in India's own national life. It can, therefore, only be resolved not by the relatively easy method of a bilateral agreement between His Majesty's Government, and representatives

of India, but by the much more difficult method of a multilateral agreement, in which His Majesty's Government is only one of the parties concerned.

There is first of all the Indian National Congress. Its leaders have repudiated the Act of 1935 in its federal aspect as a denial both of India's right to immediate complete independence and of the principles of democracy. It is in pursuance of that repudiation because India's consent was not formally invited before she was committed to war that they called out the Congress ministries in the provinces. Their demand has been that India's independence should be recognised forthwith and that the Indians should devise their own constitution in a constituent assembly elected by universal adult suffrage over all India, including territories of the Indian Princes.

In the last few weeks they have declared their willingness in the meantime to join in the war effort through a national government commanding the confidence of the elected Assembly. The Congress leaders are men inspired by an ardent national patriotism. They have built up a remarkable organisation, far the most efficient political machine in India, of which they are justly proud. They have striven to make that organisation national and all-embracing.

If only they had succeeded, if the Congress could, in fact, speak as it professes to speak for all the main elements in India's national life, then, however advanced their demands, our problem would have been in many respects far easier than it is today.

It is true that they are numerically the largest single party in British India. But their claim, in virtue of that fact, to speak for India is utterly denied by very important elements in India's complex national life. These other elements assert their right to be regarded, not as mere numerical minorities but as separate constituent factors in any future Indian policy, entitled to be treated as such in any discussions for the shaping of India's future constitution.

The foremost among these elements stands the great Muslim community, of ninety million strong and constituting a majority both in North-Western and North-Eastern India, but scattered as a minority over the whole sub-continent. In religious and social outlook, in historic tradition and culture, the difference between them and their Hindu fellow-countrymen goes as deep, if not deeper, than any similar difference in Europe. That need not and does not, prevent pleasant social inter course or fruitful political co-operation. It has not, in fact, prevented individual Muslims taking an active part in the work of the Congress Party

But, as a body, the Muslims have stood aloof. Their quarrel with the scheme of the existing Act is not that it fails to give that clear majority rule which the Congress asks for, but that it would give too great powers to a Hindu majority at the Centre. They will have nothing to do with a constitution framed by a constituent assembly elected by a majority vote in geographical constituencies. They claim the right in any constitutional discussions to be regarded as an entity and are determined only to accept a constitution whose actual structure will secure their position as an entity against the operations of a mere numerical majority.

The same, though in a lesser degree perhaps, applies to the great body of what are known as the Scheduled Castes, who feel, in spite of Mr. Gandhi's earnest endeavours on their behalf, that as a community they stand outside the main body of Hindu community which is represented by the Congress.

The Indian Princes again, with territories covering a third of all India and including nearly a quarter of its population, constitute another entity or group of entities which refuses to be assimilated to the simple democratic formula propounded by the Congress. They object to the existing scheme as interfering too greatly with their existing powers. They naturally object even more strongly to the proposed constituent assembly or to any constitution which might emerge from it. Yet they are an essen-

tial element in any Indian federation. What is more, they can make a valuable contribution to it.

In many ways their territories are the most characteristically Indian part of India. They have equally much to gain from a closer contact with the rest of India in constitutional as well as economic development, but it is idle to suppose that such a development can take place overnight or must be forced upon them before they can be allowed to play their part in a federal scheme.

It is essential to keep these differences in mind when we talk of finding a solution for India's constitutional problems. They are at the moment still unbridged. I refuse to regard them as unbridgable. Underlying them there is, after all, the fact that India is a self-contained and distinctive region of the world. There is the fact that India can boast of an ancient civilisation and of a long history common to all its peoples, of which all Indians are equally proud. Is there any Indian who is not proud to be called an Indian? Or any Indian or any community who has not felt a thrill of pride to be a fellow-countryman of a man like Rabindranath Tagore, whom Oxford has just honoured in so unique a manner? Underlying them, too, is the unity not merely of administration, but of political thought and aspiration, which we here can justly claim to have contributed to India's national life.

India cannot be unitary in the sense that we are in this island, but she can still be a unity. India's future house of freedom has room for many mansions.

In no respect has the essential unity of India's outlook been shown more clearly than in the attitude which all parties and communities have from the outset of the war taken up in detestation of Nazi aggression and in their endorsement of our common cause. The greater our difficulties, the graver the disasters that befell the Allied arms, the clearer has been the realisation in the minds of the Indian public that our cause is India's cause, the stronger the wave of sympathetic emotion for this country in its single-handed fight, the more widespread the feeling

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It is essential to keep these differences in mind when we talk of finding a solution for India's constitutional problems. They are at the moment still unbridged. I refuse to regard them as unbridgable. Underlying them there is, after all, the fact that India is a self-contained and distinctive region of the world. There is the fact that India can boast of an ancient civilisation and of a long history common to all its peoples, of which all Indians are equally proud. Is there any Indian who is not proud to be called an Indian? Or any Indian or any community who has not felt a thrill of pride to be a fellow-countryman of a man like Rabindranath Tagore, whom Oxford has just honoured in so unique a manner? Underlying them, too, is the unity not merely of administration, but of political thought and aspiration, which we here can justly claim to have contributed to India's national life.

India cannot be unitary in the sense that we are in this island, but she can still be a unity. India's future house of freedom has room for many mansions.

In no respect has the essential unity of India's outlook been shown more clearly than in the attitude which all parties and communities have from the outset of the war taken up in detestation of Nazi aggression and in their endorsement of our common cause. The greater our difficulties, the graver the disasters that befell the Allied arms, the clearer has been the realisation in the minds of the Indian public that our cause is India's cause, the stronger the wave of sympathetic emotion for this country in its single-handed fight, the more widespread the feeling



that a purely political deadlock affecting the issues of to-day and tomorrow should not be allowed to stand in the way of India's contributing a united and wholehearted effort to the cause upon whose victory depends the preservation of all her ideals and the fulfilment of all her aspirations.

It is in this atmosphere that the Viceroy felt that the moment had come for an initiative which should at the same time enlist all elements of political leadership in India behind her war effort, and also make, at any rate, a beginning in breaking down the existing political deadlock and so pave the way towards an early achievement of that goal of free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which to quote the concluding words of his statement, is 'the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.'

The immediate offer contained in the Viceroy's statement is that of an expansion of his Executive Council as Governor-General so as to include in it leading members of all political parties as well as the establishment of a wider War Advisory Council on an all-India basis, associating with the conduct of the war representatives of the Indian States and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole.

The enlarged Executive Council will, of course, under the existing constitution, still be responsible to the Governor-General and cannot be responsible in the strict constitutional sense to the Legislature. The Congress have asked that a provisional national government should be constituted at the Centre, which though formed as a transitory measure should be such as to command the confidence of all elected elements in the Central Legislature.

In inviting a certain number of representative Indians to join his Council, the Viceroy will naturally take appropriate steps to ensure that the new members do in fact reflect opinion of the parties from which they are chosen. If, however, the Congress claim is that the members of the Viceroy's Council should be dependent on the support of

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elected members of the legislature, it is in fact a demand for changing the whole basis of the Indian Government in the middle of the war.

More than that, if the House has followed the analysis I have attempted to give of the attitude of the different elements in India to the constitutional problem, it will realise that it is a demand which really raises the whole unresolved constitutional issue and pre-judges it in the sense favoured by the Congress and rejected by the minorities.

There can be no agreement on a Government responsible to the legislature until there is agreement upon the nature of the legislature and upon the whole structure of the constitution.

The Viceroy's offer, on the other hand, presents to the Indian leaders an opportunity of taking an effective and important part in the Government of India and bringing their influence to bear on the conduct of the war without prejudice to their several positions. They will have committed themselves to nothing except working together in the present emergency for the safety and good of India and for the common cause in which they all believed.

In spite of the discouraging attitude shown in Congress quarters, I still hope that they will all be willing to take their part. If that should, unfortunately, not prove to be the case, Lord Linlithgow will, of course, still go ahead prepared to work with those who will work with him and with each other.

The Viceroy's immediate offer does not, however, stand by itself. His initiative has been concerned, as I said just now, not only with India's fuller participation in the actual present war effort, but also with paving the way towards a speedier attainment of the goal at which we are aiming.

May I say a word about that goal, Dominion Status, as it has commonly been described, or as I prefer to des-

cribe it, a free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth. It is not, as is so often implied when Dominion Status is contrasted with full independence, an inferior or dependent status. The status in the Commonwealth of the Dominions—or of this country for that matter, for our status is the same though not perhaps our stature—is indeed superior to that of nations that perforce stand alone.

How many so-called independent nations are really free to live their own lives as they will, even when they are not directly overrun or dismembered by more powerful neighbours? We of the British Commonwealth enjoy something more. We enjoy the security, the prosperity, the friendship and, I would add, the enhanced dignity in the eyes of the world which come to each of us as a result of our free and equal association.

There is no higher status in the world than that, and that is the status which we have declared to be the goal of our policy in India.

Our declarations, however, have apparently still left in certain quarters doubts as to the sincerity of our purpose and have raised, not unnaturally, the question both of the time when and the methods by which we mean to fulfil them. It is to that question that the Viceroy, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, has now given an answer which marks, I think, a notable step forward on the path to the accepted goal.

May I quote here the most significant passage in the Viceroy's statement:—"There has been very strong insistence that the framing of that scheme"—that is the new constitutional scheme for India—"should be primarily the responsibility of the Indians themselves and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life. His Majesty's Government are in sympathy with that desire and wish to see it given the fullest practical expression, subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed on her and for

which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility.'

The recognition of these obligations is not an impairment of status but only a recognition of facts, historic or geographical, which differentiate the present position of India from that of other Dominions. As the late Lord Balfour pointed out in his remarkable exposition of the nature of British Commonwealth relations in the constitutional report of the Imperial Conference of 1926, 'the principles of equality and similarity appropriate to status do not universally extend to function,' and he instanced, in particular, the functions of defence and foreign policy.

It is in respect of these, for example, that the position of India, both in virtue of her historic military organisation and of her geographical position, differs from that of the Dominions. But the difference that arises from these and similar obligations is one of degree and not of kind. For in the case of every Dominion there has always been some measure of adjustment, formal or informal, to British obligations. Subject to these matters the desire of His Majesty's Government is that the new Constitution of India should be devised by the Indians for themselves and should—may I quote the words again—'originate from Indian conceptions of the social economic and political structure of Indian life.'

That task is to be undertaken with the least possible delay after the war by 'a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life.' That means a body constituted in agreement between the representatives of the elements. It does not mean a body set up on lines which may commend themselves to one particular element, however influential, but may be regarded as wholly unacceptable to the minority elements.

His Majesty's Government have made it clear that they could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life.

In this matter, too, there is no departure from the principles which have governed the coming into existence of every Dominion constitution. In every case in the Dominions there has been antecedent agreement, not only between the geographical units but also between the main racial elements—English and French in Canada, British and Boer in South Africa—both as to the method of framing the constitution and as to the constitution itself.

Agreement, consent, is indeed the foundation of all free government, of all true democracy. Decision by majority is not so much of the essence of democracy as a practical convenience, which presupposes for its proper working an antecedent general consent to the constitution itself. It has, indeed, in most federal constitutions been limited in various ways in order to safeguard the separate interests of the federating elements.

To describe the need for such agreement as a veto on constitutional progress is, I think, to do an injustice to the patriotism and sense of responsibility of those concerned. Agreement means not veto by any elements but compromise, and willingness to compromise in India, as elsewhere, is an essential test of the sense of responsibility on which free government must be based.

On the other hand, within the limitations imposed by the necessity of securing agreement the whole constitutional field is open to re-examination. It may, indeed, prove to be the case that it is by entirely novel departures from the existing scheme, whether in the relation of the Centre to the provinces or to the States or in the methods of election and representation, that an agreement can be reached which is unattainable within the framework of the existing Act, based as it is on the traditions of India's administrative past and on our customary British constitutional conceptions.

So much for the question of method. There is the question no less insistently asked as to the date. Here the answer given by the statement is also clear. The decisive resolution of these great constitutional issues, the

actual setting up of a new system of government, cannot come at a moment when we are all engaged in a desperate struggle for existence.

How soon it can come after the war is essentially in India's own hands. The experience of every Dominion has shown that these fundamental issues are not lightly or speedily settled. What I have told the House of the complexity and difficulty of India's peculiar problems does not suggest that her experience in this respect will be essentially different from that of others.

There is always an immense amount of preliminary discussion, inquiry and negotiation which has to be got through before the real decisive meetings take place. There is absolutely no reason why any of this indispensable preliminary work should wait for the end of the war. The more completely and thoroughly it is done now, the wider the agreement reached now as to the form of the post-war representative body, as to the methods and procedure by which we should arrive at its conclusions and as to the principles and outlines of the constitution itself, the more speedily can everything be settled after the war is over.

So far as His Majesty's Government are concerned they have offered to welcome and promote in any way possible such preliminary friendly discussion and investigation and have equally promised to lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters when it comes to the subsequent task of finally settling the constitution. They can do no more.

The responsibility for securing a speedy as well as satisfactory result rests upon the Indians themselves.

I submit that the Viceroy's Initiative represents a sincere effort on our part to make such contribution as we can towards the smooth and speedy attainment of the desired goal. Others must also make their contribution. No one element or party can hope to get all that it wants, or at least to get all at once. If we agree upon the end let us all work for it with sympathy understanding, pa-

tience and goodwill towards each other. That at any rate is the spirit in which His Majesty's Government are resolved to persevere in the carrying out of the policy which they have now defined. So far as we in this country are concerned, we have every reason to be proud of what we have contributed in the past to the history and to the life of India.

But I, at any rate, believe with Lord Macaulay that the proudest day of our history will be the day when we see India joining, a free and willing partner, in the brotherhood of the British peoples. As for India she will give, I know, her effective answer to tyranny and aggression in the field of war. But she can give an even more conclusive answer in the field of constructive statesmanship.

In a world threatened by all the evil forces of hatred and destruction, of partisan and racial intolerance, there could be no more hopeful portent, no more assured omen of the ultimate victory of our cause, than that the leaders of India's millions should in peaceful agreement resolve not only their own perplexing discords but also afford yet one further example within our British Commonwealth of the power of goodwill to reconcile freedom and unity and through our Commonwealth to bridge the agelong gulf between Europe and Asia. Then indeed could we say with justice that the dawn of a better day for the world was beralded in the East.

### REPLY TO THE DEBATE

Replying to the debate in which Mr. C. G. Ammor, Mr. Graham White, Sir Hugh O'Neill, Sir Frederick Sykes, Mr. Sorensen, Mr. A. V. Hill, Sir Alfred Knox, Mr. Vernon Bartlett, Sir Stanley Reed and Major Milner spoke, Mr. L. S. Amery said:

"With regard to the numbers, composition and powers of the Executive Council I have been asked a number of questions. As regards the numbers, that of course must depend to some extent upon the nature of the response which is made to the Viceroy's offer but in any case it *does involve an appreciable enlargement of the present*



numbers of the Executive. The new members of the Executive will be on a footing of entire equality with the existing members of the Executive Council. They will hold definite portfolios.

"They will exercise responsibilities, both of their important departmental work and of the influence which they will naturally exert in the collective discussions of the Viceroy's Council. They are not of course nominees of the parties, but on the other hand it is obviously implicit in the whole purpose of the Viceroy's policy that they should be representative of the parties from which they are selected and they will no doubt be selected after discussion and consideration of names informally submitted."

Mr. Amery continued: "They will not in the strict constitutional sense be responsible to the Assembly, but clearly if there is that response which the Viceroy hopes for, and if all the leading parties are represented in the Executive will naturally enjoy a wide measure of confidence and support in the Assembly.

"On the other hand I cannot accept the suggestion that the enlarged Executive can be converted at a time like this into a Parliamentary minority responsible to the majority in Parliament. That involves a complete inversion of the present Indian situation and, what is more, prejudices all the constitutional problems which are still entirely unresolved as between the parties. Therefore, that is not in the present circumstances a practical suggestion.

"As to what is to follow in the case of the Provincial Councils, that naturally must depend again very largely upon the nature of the response at the Centre and the way the new development works out. That would clearly have its effect upon the provinces and must be judged in the light of the result at the Centre."

Mr. Amery continued: "The War Advisory Council would be a considerably larger body of some 20 or more. Its function will be to bring together a wide range of

experience and special knowledge from all over India in order, on the one hand, to inform and advise the Government of India as regards the conduct of India's war effort and the development of India's resources and, on the other hand, to go away from these consultations in order severally to stimulate that war effort in the various fields, geographical or industrial, from which the members of the Advisory Council will be drawn."

Sir Hugh O'Neill interjecting said: "Will they be purely Indian members?"

"Obviously the European industrial and commercial community in India is of considerable importance and would naturally be considered for representation on this wider body. The great thing is that this wider body should assemble for the Government of India their knowledge in every important field of India's national life, and in turn exercise influence upon the war effort in every field.

"Many questions have been asked on the nature and constitution of the future body which is to consider and frame the constitution of India after the war. The matter is described in the White Paper and I pointed out in my speech that it is most important that the body should be arrived at by agreement."

Mr. Amery continued: "It is not for me here to prescribe the nature of that body. I would certainly say that there is no type of body which is ruled out, provided it is agreed upon by these principal elements and is in that sense representative of those elements."

He then read from the White Paper a statement regarding the body and added: "That would not mean that this body would be a merely Round Table Conference of Commissions whose views may or may not be taken into serious consideration. The whole intention is that the work of this body should be taken seriously and that it should provide the main framework of the future constitution of India."

Sir Alfred Knox interposed: "The recommendations will finally come before this House."

Mr. Amery replied: "Exactly as in the case of the various Dominions. Our endeavour is to bring India on practical lines on the same method as has been followed in the case of the Dominions. In every case their constitutions have, after a certain amount of discussion and consideration, come before this House and given the constitutional ratification this House has undoubtedly to give."

Mr. Amery continued: "Regarding the future position of the Princes, these obligations, in so far as the Princes have not fully entered into the new constitution scheme, will, of course, remain in effect. These are standing obligations, just as in the Dominion of South Africa there were obligations which continued after the creation of the new Dominion."

"As to the preparations for the meeting of that body, I have been asked whether the members of the large Executive were to be the body to begin that preliminary work. They certainly have not been selected for that purpose, but for the very definite and important duties they are to perform."

"What is hoped is that in the atmosphere of co-operation in war effort by a large Executive and by the War Advisory Council, the differences which have been intensified by, what I might call, the long-range political cannonading of the parties at each other, may get another perspective and may seem less, or their surmounting seem more desirable in the light of the greater consciousness of India's unity and India's place in the world."

"If that test of investigation, of study and discussion is begun now, the further it is carried, the more thoroughly it is worked out, obviously the more speedily can the actual reconstruction of the Government of India take place after the war. This is a matter which must rise out of agreement among Indians themselves."

Mr. Amery added: "That does not mean that I entirely agree that we should sit aside. We shall certainly make every effort to encourage the horses to go to the water, but it may not always be in our power to make them drink."

"That brings me to one note that ran largely through the speech of Mr. Sorensen. I entirely agree with him that it is our business to try and understand India's outlook and point of view and deal with it, not from the point of view, of a superior dealing with an inferior, but as equals.

"On the other hand, I think that he greatly oversimplified the problem when he suggested that this was a question of imposing the will of this country on the will of India. It is far more, believe me, a question of reconciling the conflicting wills of India.

"At present that conflict of wills is still unresolved and still very serious. We must not under-estimate the seriousness of those difficulties or believe that they can be brushed aside by treating them as if India were a homogenous country like this, and as if its great elements, the elements of tens of millions, could be regarded merely as those continually fluctuating minorities with which we are accustomed to dealing in this country. They are separate factors which have got to be fitted somehow into the composite mosaic of India's future constitution."

Mr. Amery said: "At the same time I do believe sincerely that there is enough of a wider patriotism and of statesmanship in India to resolve those difficulties and differences. It is to that statesmanship in India that we have got to look in these matters; we can contribute I hope our share of statesmanship, of goodwill and of understanding."

"I am well disposed to believe," concluded Mr. Amery, "That India will also contribute her share and that, out of our joint efforts, there may emerge something of which the Briton and Indian alike can be proud for generations to come, and it may make this contribution, not only to the permanent strength and prosperity of our own British Commonwealth but also by its example to the regeneration of distressed world."

## WORKING COMMITTEE

*Wardha, Aug. 13—23, 1940.*

### VICEREGAL DECLARATION

The Working Committee have read the statement issued by the Viceroy on the authority of the British Government on the 8th of August and the report of the speech of the Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons explaining the Viceroy's Statement. They note with deep regret that the British Government have rejected the friendly offer and practical suggestion contained in the Poona resolution of the A.I.C.C. of 28th July framed for a solution of the deadlock and to enable the Indian National Congress to withdraw its non-co-operation and secure in the present crisis the patriotic co-operation of all the people of India in the governance of India and the organisation of national defence.

The Working Committee have read with deep pain and indignation the declarations and assumptions contained in the statements and speeches made on behalf of the British Government which seek to deny India her natural right of complete national freedom and reiterate the untenable claim that Britain should maintain herself in a dominant position in India in the discharge of the higher functions of the State. These claims render false and empty even their own promise to recognise India at an early date, as a free and equal unit within the British Commonwealth. Such claims and recent events and developments in the world have confirmed the Committee's conviction that India cannot function within the orbit of an imperial power and must attain the status of a free and independent nation. This does not prevent close association with other countries within a comity of free nations for the peace and progress of the world.

The Working Committee are of opinion that the assertion contained in the statements made on behalf of the British Government that they will not part with power and responsibility in favour of the elected representatives of the people of India, and that, therefore, the present autocratic and irresponsible system of government

must continue so long as any group of people or the Princes, as distinguished from the people of the States or perhaps even foreign vested interests raise objections to any constitution framed by the elected representatives of the people of India, is a direct encouragement and incitement to civil discord and strife, and amounts to a fatal blow to all willingness to compromise and adjustment of claims.

The Committee regret that although the Congress has never thought in terms of coercing any minority, much less of asking the British Government to do so, the demand for a settlement of the constitution through a Constituent Assembly of duly elected representatives has been made into an insuperable barrier to India's progress. The Congress has proposed that minority rights should be amply protected by agreement with elected representatives of the minorities concerned. The Working Committee, therefore, cannot but conclude that the attitude and assertions contained in these statements made on behalf of the British Government confirm the prevailing feeling that the British authority has been continually operating so as to create, maintain and aggravate differences in India's national life.

The Working Committee note with astonishment that the demand for the constitution of a Provisional National Government composed of persons commanding the confidence of the various elected groups in the present Central Legislature, formed under the 1919 Constitution of India, has been described by the Secretary of State for India as one that would raise the unsolved constitutional issue and prejudice it in favour of the majority and against the minorities. The Working Committee are of opinion that the rejection of this proposal unmistakably indicates that there is no willingness on the part of the British Government to part with any power and authority even for the immediate purpose of securing co-operation in war efforts. The British Government would gather together and carry on with such dissentient groups and individuals as oppose the wishes of the majority of the people of India, and without any co-ordination with elected legislatures at the

Centre or in the Provinces, rather than concede anything that would work towards the recognition of the rights of the people of India to rule themselves democratically.

For these reasons the Working Committee have come to the conclusion that the Statements referred to are wholly opposed not only to the principle of democracy as acclaimed by the British Government in the War, but also to the best interests of India, and they cannot be a party to accepting the proposals contained in the statements or advising the country to accept them. The Working Committee consider that these declarations and offers not only fall far short of the Congress demand, but would be impediments to the evolution of a free and united India.

The Working Committee call upon the people to condemn the attitude adopted by the British Government by means of public meetings and otherwise, as also through their elected representatives in the Provincial Legislatures.

### STRUGGLE

The decision of the British Government to enforce their will in India in opposition to the will of the great majority of the people, and regardless of consequences, has produced a situation of the utmost gravity. The rejection of the Congress proposals is a proof of the British Government's determination to continue to hold India by sword. In order to compass this end they have been endeavouring to undermine the strength of the Congress by picking up and arresting hundreds of public workers, including some of the best workers of the Congress, under the Defence of India Act which has no popular sanction whatever. The desire of the Congress not to embarrass the British Government, at a time of peril for them, has been misunderstood and despised. They are imposing on the Congress a struggle to vindicate its position and to act for the preservation of the liberties and honour of the people. The Congress can have no thought but that of the supreme good of the dumb and toiling millions of India and through them of the whole of submerged humanity.

In view of the gravity, of the situation, the Working Committee have decided to convene a meeting of the All India Congress Committee on Sunday, September 15, 1940.

The Working Committee call upon all Congress organisations to carry on their activities with full vigour and in particular to explain the Congress position and recent developments to the public. Satyagraha Committees must see that those who have taken the pledge act in terms of this pledge and carry on the constructive and other activities of the Congress.

## CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE VICEROY AND THE CONGRESS PRESIDENT

*(Released for publication on Aug. 29, 1940.)*

Letter from H. E. the Viceroy to the Congress President:

OOTACAMUND, August, 4.

‘ “Dear Maulana Sahib,

“You will be aware that I have in the last few weeks been in contact with various political leaders, including Mr. Gandhi, in regard to the Indian political situation. I have, I need not say, informed His Majesty's Government of the results of my discussions with the various leaders concerned; and I am glad to say that I have in the result been authorised to make the statement of which

I now enclose an advance copy. That statement will appear in the morning papers of Thursday, August 8, and I would ask that until its appearance it should be treated as for your entirely secret and personal information.

“As you will see, I have been authorised to invite a certain number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council. I have been authorised further to establish War Advisory Council which would meet at regular intervals and which would contain representatives of the Indian States and of other interests in the national life



of India as a whole. I trust sincerely that the Indian National Congress will feel able to join with me in the Central Government and in the War Advisory Council; and I should welcome it if you could let me have a very early answer on that point, if possible not later than August 21.

"I readily conceive that it might be convenient for you to discuss this matter further with me before you send me a formal reply on behalf of the Indian National Congress. I shall, as at present arranged, be in Poona from August 6 to 11 and in Bombay from August 11 to 14, and I hope to reach Delhi on my way back to Simla on August 20.

"I shall be very glad to see you and any friend whom you may care to bring with you at any of these places at any time convenient to you, should you desire to pursue the matter as I have suggested in conversation before sending me a more formal reply to this invitation. Perhaps you would be good enough to let me know whether you would see advantage in this, and if so what date and time would be convenient to you.

"I would only add that I am, as you will, I know, understand, anxious that effect should be given with as little delay as possible to the decisions of His Majesty's Government; and that I am concerned to announce the personnel of the expanded Executive Council by the end of August, and of the War Advisory Council at the latest by about the middle of September, but in any event with as little delay after the announcement of the personnel of the expanded Executive Council as practicable.

"Yours Sincerely,  
(Sd.) LINLITHGOW."

#### CONGRESS PRESIDENT'S REPLY

Telegram from the Congress President to H. E. the Viceroy, in reply to the letter of the Viceroy, dated Ootacamund, August 4 :

CALCUTTA, August 8.

"His Excellency Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy's Camp.

"Thanks for Your Excellency's letter of August 4 and advance copy of declaration received last evening. I am thankful for the invitation to see you. I would have readily availed of the pleasure of meeting you but when His Majesty's Government have already thought fit to announce a definite line of action may I ask how far there still remains a chance of usefulness of further discussion?

ABUL KALAM AZAD.

Telegram of H. E. the Viceroy to Maulana A. K. Azad received on August 10.

"Your telegram of August 8. The policy of His Majesty's Government is set out in my statement and it is my hope that within its terms the Indian National Congress will, as indicated in my letter to you of August 4, feel able to join with me in the Central Government and in the War Advisory Council. As my letter makes clear, I should be very glad to see you with any friend whom you may care to bring with you should you desire to pursue the matter in conversation before sending me a more formal reply to my invitation, and if you see advantage in this I would be grateful if you would telegraph to let me know as soon as possible the date and place which you suggest. My own movements remain as described in my letter to you of August 4.

LINLITHGOW.

Telegram from the Congress President to H. E. the Viceroy :

CALCUTTA, August 10.

His Excellency Lord Linlithgow, Camp Poona.

"Thanks for Your Excellency's telegram received through Government House. I do not find any meeting ground for the Congress in the terms of the declaration of August 8. Apart from other fundamental questions, there is not even any suggestion for a national Government. Under the circumstances I am unable to find any

scope for further discussion. I am calling the Working Committee on August 18 to consider and decide.

ABUL KALAM AZAD.

Congress President's letter to the Viceroy confirming the above two telegrams:

Calcutta,

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

August 11, 1940.

I had received your Excellency's letter of August 4, on the evening of August 7. As it was necessary to call the Congress Working Committee as soon as possible, and to consider any other thing which might be necessary before calling it, I thought it advisable to reply your Excellency's letter telegraphically. Accordingly I sent the following telegram:

(Quoted above)

I received your Excellency's second telegram through the Government House Calcutta (quoted above) on August 10, in reply to which I sent the following telegram on the same day:

(Quoted above)

I would assure you that it would always be a pleasure to me to pay a visit to Your Excellency. When I found that our discussion could not go beyond the terms laid down by the declaration, of August 8, I felt that I could not find my way for further discussion.

Yours Sincerely,

Sd. A. K. AZAD.

Letter from the Congress President to H. E. the Viceroy:

CAMP WARDHA, August, 19.

"Dear Lord Linlithgow,

"As I informed Your Excellency in my telegram from Calcutta of August 10. I convened a meeting of the Congress Working Committee for August 18 to consider the statement made on behalf of the British Government. The Committee gave their careful consideration to this statement as well as to the amplification of it in the British Parliament.

"The Working Committee will express their views in the course of the next few days dealing with this matter more fully, but meanwhile I may inform you that the Committee have read the statements embodying the British Government's decisions and attitude in regard to India, with deep regret. These are totally at variance with the proposals last put forward by the Congress at Poona and with the objective of the Congress. The Working Committee are of the opinion that they cannot associate themselves in any way with these proposals.

"As I ventured to say in my telegram to you, I would have gladly availed myself of the opportunity to meet you and discuss the whole question. But your letter and your wire made it clear that the discussion was to take place within the rigid framework of your announcement which was wholly inadequate for the Congress purpose. Moreover, your letter had left it to me to decide whether I should see you before coming at a final decision. As I did not consider it necessary to trouble you about minor matters, I decided to forgo the pleasure of meeting you.

"I shall be grateful if you will kindly let me know if you have any objection to my releasing our correspondence to the Press.

"Yours Sincerely,  
A. K. AZAD."